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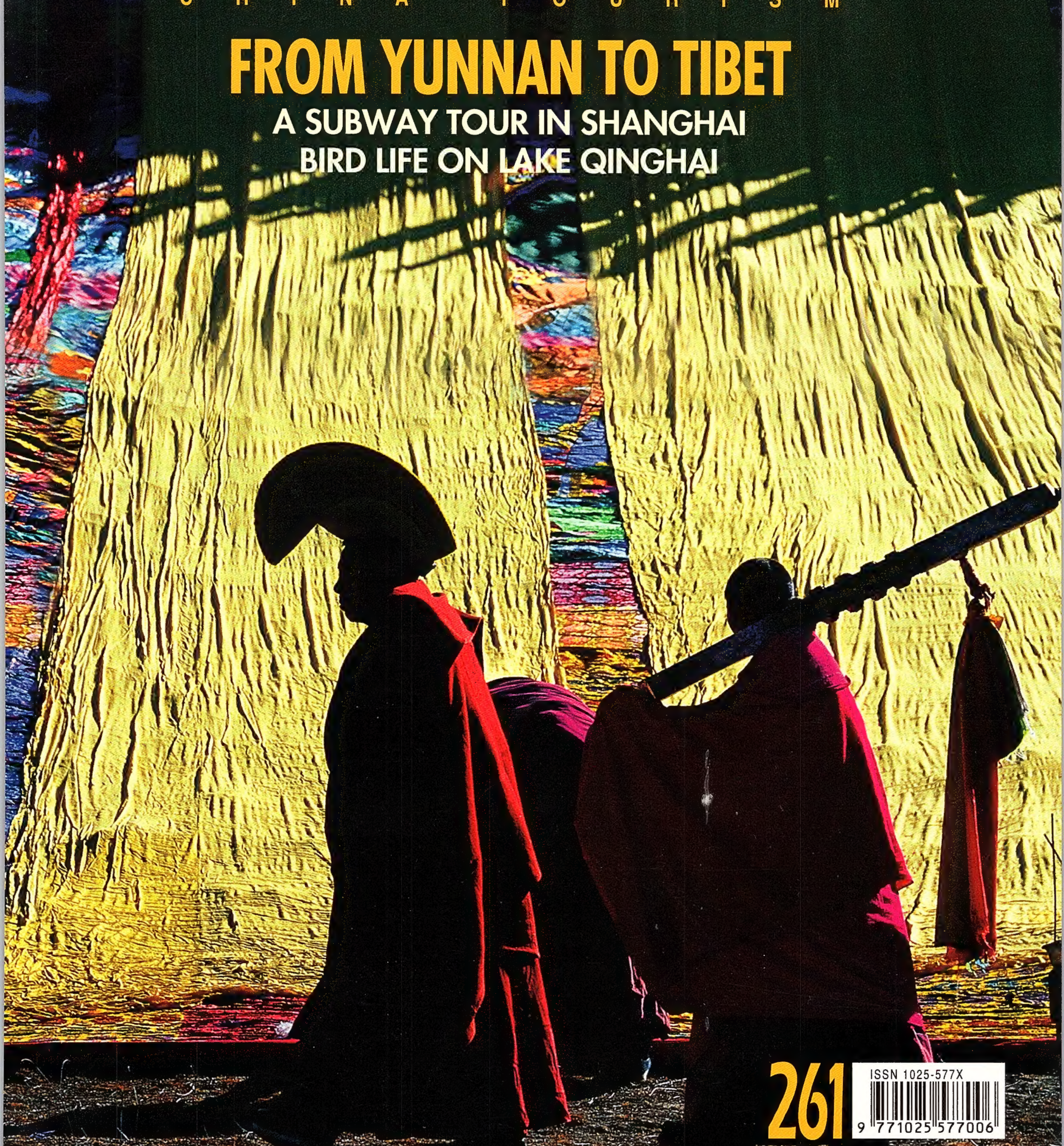

FROM YUNNAN TO TIBET

A SUBWAY TOUR IN SHANGHAI

BIRD LIFE ON LAKE QINGHAI

261

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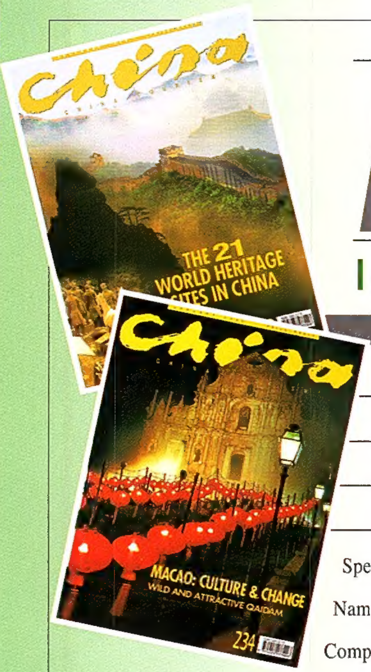
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Tibet is a place that many people hope to visit. A small tour group, including our reporter and a Japanese man, spent 35 days travelling from Yunnan Province to Tibet. They overcame many hardships and encountered dangers on the road, but were rewarded with unique experiences — seeing Qomolangma, the world's highest peak, visiting a celestial burial site and being lucky enough to see several charming rainbows on Nam Lake Co.

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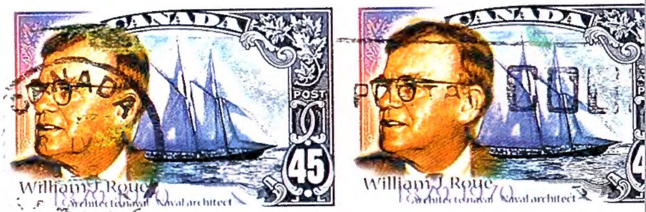

On this page we include letters and comments from our readers. We welcome and value all suggestions, criticism and questions from our readers anytime. Please post, fax or E-mail your letters and comments to us (details at the bottom of the page).

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

I first saw China Tourism magazine in a bookstore last year and it was really a nice surprise for me as a foreigner. Both the pictures and articles are fantastic. I was happy to see several new columns in Issue 260. Among them, I like "City Snaps" and "HK Mosaic" the best. I also appreciated the report on an ethnic group living between Guizhou and Guangxi. It was interesting to read about an ethnic group so much like the ancient Japanese living in China! If there was a detailed itinerary listing the cost and travel routes for the trip, it would be perfect.

Meanwhile, I hope to see some inter-province articles focusing on railways, bridges, or business districts in China. I also enjoy topics featuring the past and present of some cities or people. For instance, from "Waves Rise and Fall Like Hopes and Dreams" in Issue 253, I have learnt about both the changes to a small town in Fujian and the feelings of the writer.

Ray K. Yoshida
Osaka

Dear Editor,

I have been a subscriber to "China Tourism" over the past decade since I moved to Hong Kong from the United States. As a Westerner eager to learn about China and its people, your magazine serves as a friendly cultural ambassador and a faithful tour guide. Over the years, I've noticed that this lovely periodical has been improving itself ceaselessly, especially in photography and layout.

However, in some of the major articles, it seems to me that more cultural resources should be tapped to give readers in-depth knowledge about a place's history, people and their lifestyles. For a prestigious publication like "China Tourism", it's not enough to just relate a reporter's personal feelings regarding a scenic spot or a historical site, or to use phrases such as "it is said" or "I have heard". Most readers expect more meaningful content and useful references from this kind of publication.

Judy Smith
Hong Kong

Editor's Note:

As noted, China Tourism has consistently worked to improve its presentation and variety of articles over its 20-plus years of publication. It is the wish of all our staff members to create a magazine that is useful, enlightening and entertaining. We will take both readers' suggestions into consideration in future issues.

Readership Survey Note:

A reader has recently asked "China Tourism" to publish an index of back issues according to destination on a regular basis. "China Tourism" does publish such an index once a year near the back of each February issue, detailing the previous year's publications. The most recent list is found in Issue No. 259.

Please send your letters to:
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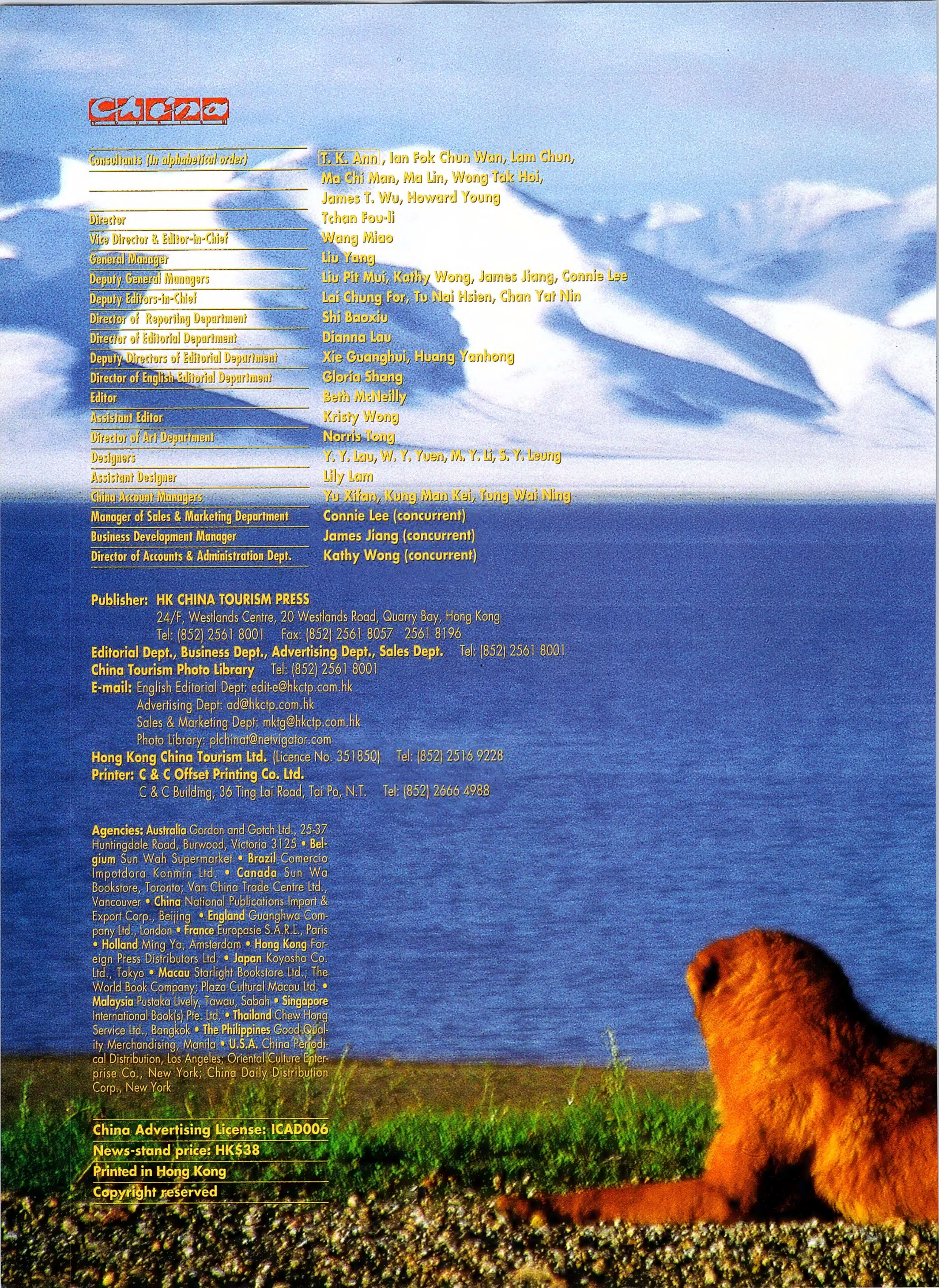

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Publisher: HK CHINA TOURISM PRESS
24/F, Westlands Centre, 20 Westlands Road, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2561 8001 Fax: (852) 2561 8057 2561 8196
Editorial Dept., Business Dept., Advertising Dept., Sales Dept. Tel: (852) 2561 8001
China Tourism Photo Library Tel: (852) 2561 8001
E-mail: English Editorial Dept: edit-e@hkctp.com.hk
Advertising Dept: ad@hkctp.com.hk
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Hong Kong China Tourism Ltd. (Licence No. 351850) Tel: (852) 2516 9228
Printer: C & C Offset Printing Co. Ltd.
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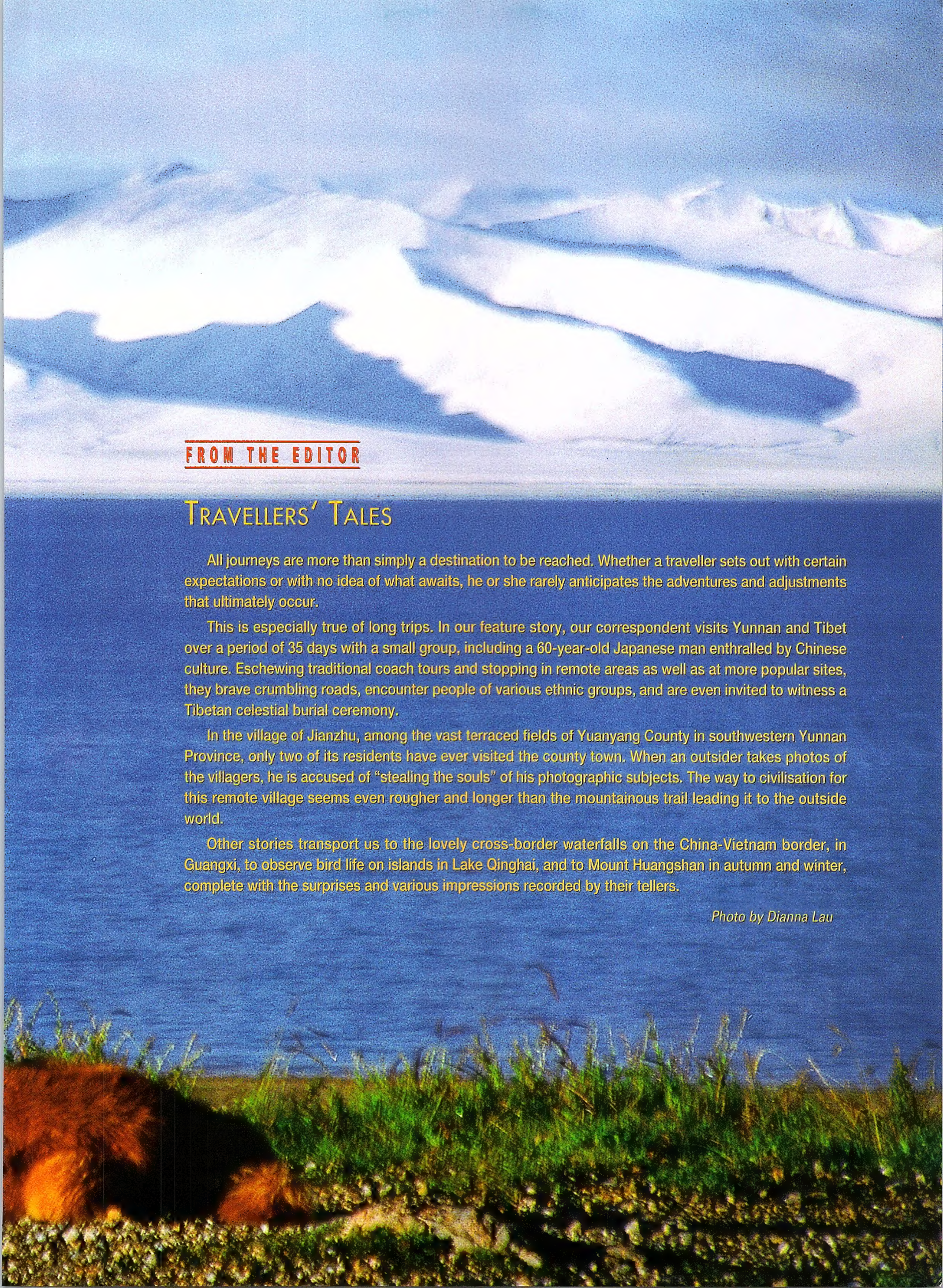


FROM THE EDITOR

TRAVELLERS' TALES

All journeys are more than simply a destination to be reached. Whether a traveller sets out with certain expectations or with no idea of what awaits, he or she rarely anticipates the adventures and adjustments that ultimately occur.

This is especially true of long trips. In our feature story, our correspondent visits Yunnan and Tibet over a period of 35 days with a small group, including a 60-year-old Japanese man enthralled by Chinese culture. Eschewing traditional coach tours and stopping in remote areas as well as at more popular sites, they brave crumbling roads, encounter people of various ethnic groups, and are even invited to witness a Tibetan celestial burial ceremony.

In the village of Jianzhu, among the vast terraced fields of Yuanyang County in southwestern Yunnan Province, only two of its residents have ever visited the county town. When an outsider takes photos of the villagers, he is accused of "stealing the souls" of his photographic subjects. The way to civilisation for this remote village seems even rougher and longer than the mountainous trail leading it to the outside world.

Other stories transport us to the lovely cross-border waterfalls on the China-Vietnam border, in Guangxi, to observe bird life on islands in Lake Qinghai, and to Mount Huangshan in autumn and winter, complete with the surprises and various impressions recorded by their tellers.

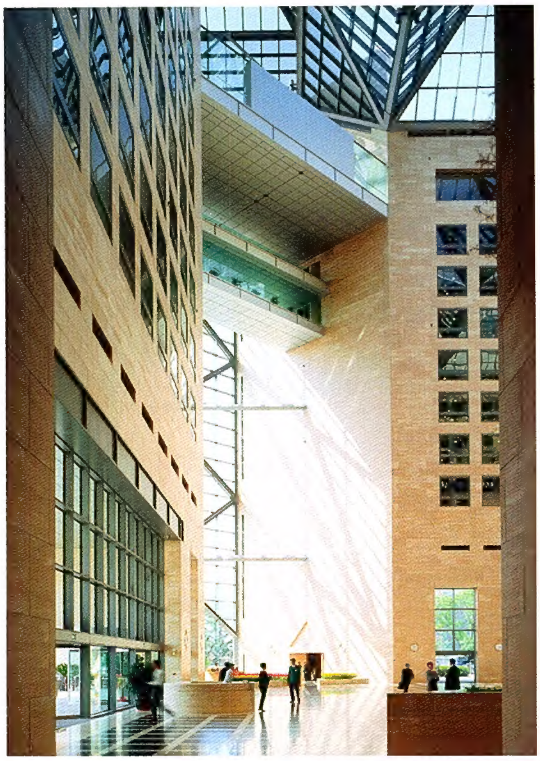
Photo by Dianna Lau

Beijing Financial Street Taking Shape

A new financial centre, Beijing Financial Street (BFS), is emerging in the Chinese capital's Xichang (West City) District. Covering an area of 103 hectares, the street is now home to more than 500 government departments, financial institutions and well-known companies, including the headquarters of the People's Bank of China, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, the China Construction Bank, China Securities Regulatory Commission, China Insurance Regulatory Commission, China Telecom, China Mobile and China International Travel Service.

The central part of BFS, occupying an area of 34 hectares, will focus on financial culture, internationalisation, ecology, humanism and preseriting an image of vitality. Thirty-seven percent of the land will be set aside as green land. The section is designed to attract international securities and financial institutions. Five-star hotels, a financiers' club, an international convention centre, an international school, and apartments for foreigners are being built. Restaurants and bars, shopping, relaxation and amusement areas will also be provided.

The business centre is situated between the Fuxingmen and Fuchengmen subway stations, 3.5 km from Tian'anmen Square, just one kilometre west of Xidan, one of Beijing's three major commercial centres.



Clean Water Plan for the Yangtse

An ambitious programme has been mapped out to clean up the pollution-plagued Yangtse River, from which two-fifths of China's 1.2 billion people take their drinking water.

According to project coordinators, the waterway will be divided into four major sub-areas: protection zone, buffer zone, exploitation zone and reserve zone. The exploitation zone is further divided according to different uses, such as household, industrial, irrigation, aquatic cultivation and sightseeing. In each zone, different measures will be taken to prevent or reduce pollution. Meanwhile, the river's economic potential will be further tapped as long as it is not at the expense of water resource contamination. The entire project is to be completed by 2010.

The Yangtse, China's longest and the world's third longest river, has long been polluted by industrial and domestic waste. Unchecked, excessive activity along the waterway has also led to increasing soil erosion, making it vulnerable to floods. In 1998, flooding cost the nation 160 billion yuan (US$19.3 billion) in economic losses. When this comprehensive project is finished, millions of people living along the water system will have cleaner water and the environment of the whole valley will be remarkably improved.

First Tourist Group from the Mainland to Indonesia

A group of tourists will leave Beijing for Indonesia on March 16. It is the first group to travel to Indonesia for tourism purposes. Indonesia and Malta have joined other places as tourist destinations for Chinese people from the mainland.

China Travel Service is organising tours from Beijing to Indonesia's Bali Island, with a stopover at Hong Kong, for 7,800 yuan (US$940) per person. While the price is considered high, the travel agency explains that this is because there is no direct flight between Beijing and Indonesia. People in the travel industry expect Indonesia to become another hot tourist destination during the coming seven-day Labour Day holiday in May.

A Centenarian City in the Pearl River Delta, Guangdong

Jiangmen, a city in Guangdong Province in the Pearl River Delta, has been recognised as a centenarian city. There are 203 people aged 100 years or older living in the city, most of whom reside in rural areas. Jiangmen has a population of 3.7 million, of which 78,000 people are currently over 80 years of age. It has 18 centenarians for every one million residents, three times higher than China's national average.

Kangrinboqê: Circling the Sacred Mountain in the Year of the Horse

Kangrinboqê Peak in Ngari Prefecture, 1,200 km from Lhasa, capital city of the Tibet Autonomous Region, is worshipped as a sacred mountain by people of different religious beliefs in this area. Tibetan Buddhists take the 6,714-metre-high mountain as their Mount Sumeru, the king of all saint mountains; followers of Bon, an ancient Tibetan religion, believe it is the birthplace of their religion; in Hinduism, it is called Kailash, meaning "the centre of the world", the domain of Shiva, the Destroyer and Transformer; the Jains of India believe the first of their saints was emancipated there.

Millions of Tibetans and Indians wish to make a pilgrimage to the sacred mountain at least once in their lifetime. Such a journey requires them to complete a 53-km circle around the mountain. For Tibetan Buddhists, a circumambulation of Kangrinboqê Peak is even more powerful this year, the Year of the Horse. It is said that Sakyamuni, founder of Buddhism, was born in the Year of the Horse, and the peak is the abode of Samvara, a wrathful manifestation of Sakyamuni. So a circle in the Year of the Horse is equal to 13 circles in normal years. It is believed that after circling the sacred mountain once, a pilgrim's accumulated sins are erased; after making 108 circles, one achieves nirvana.

Xi'an: Ceiling on Building Heights

Xi'an, provincial capital of Northwest China's Shaanxi, is a famed ancient capital. To protect the charm of this 3,000-plus-year-old city, the municipal government has adopted a regulation to limit the height of buildings to be built near old structures. Buildings 20 metres or less from the inner side of the City Wall must be demolished; those 100 metres or less from the wall must be no taller than nine metres.

The government's regulation also stipulates that new buildings inside the old city area surrounded by the 12-km city wall may not be more than 36 metres in height, while new structures built within 60 metres of the outside of the wall should be less than 24 metres tall.

The 12-metre-tall City Wall of Xi'an was built during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) as an extension of the older Tang-dynasty (618-907) structure. It was rebuilt in the 1980s and is a major tourist attraction in the city. Xi'an had served as the capital of 11 dynasties over a period of 1,068 years. It is one of China's six well-preserved ancient cities, with a large number of cultural relics.

Grottoes in the Northwest Protected

Gansu Province in Northwest China boasts numerous grottoes housing invaluable cultural relics, including the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang, a World Heritage site. Six institutes involved in cultural relic protection in the province will be granted a total of 2.6 million yuan (US$313,250) to protect the grottoes.

Gansu has more than 160 grotto sites of different types, of which 40 are world famous. In addition to the Mogao Grottoes, the Maiji Mountain Grottoes in Tianshui are also considered a rare treasure-trove of Buddhist art.

Luxury Railway Station to Be Built, Sichuan

The provincial government of Sichuan plans to spend 100 million yuan (US$12 million) to build a luxury railway station in its capital, Chengdu. The most advanced electronics and computer systems will be installed for railway operations and passenger service, and big TV screens will provide information on train arrivals and departures. The station will also have a souvenir and snack area for passengers.

Chengdu is the transport hub of China's Southwest, with a well-developed national railway and highway system.

Tourist Information Net Set Up

Beijing A non-profitable tourist information network is now operating in Beijing, giving visitors convenient access to a variety of services. Apart from a main tourist information centre, nine stands have been established at major scenic spots throughout the city to provide general travel information, flight ticket ordering, emergency aid, a complaint registering service and souvenir displays. The network is linked via the Internet and is available in Chinese and English. Each stand bears the "I" logo, the first letter of "Information", an international symbol for such stands. More tourist information stands will open at other scenic spots in China in future.

HK Museum of Medical Sciences

Hong Kong After a thorough renovation late last year, the Museum of Medical Sciences (MMS) is now open to the public. The first of its kind to serve both as an educational venue and to restore and conserve medical objects of historical value, the museum contains 11 exhibition galleries featuring the medical history of Hong Kong, traditional Chinese medicine and medicinal herbs, and dentistry. It also explores the common ground between Chinese and Western medicine and encourages research in this area.

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Shanghai Improves Its Image

Shanghai In order to further the image of Shanghai as a modern metropolis in China, the Shanghai municipal government has set up new rules for local residents. As of 2002, the drying of clothes on major roads or near scenic spots in the city will incur a fine.

Japanese Students to China Visa Free

As of 2002, the 30th anniversary of the official normalisation of bilateral relations between China and Japan, study groups from Japanese high schools travelling to China are no longer required to obtain their visas before departure. With encouragement and assistance from China National Tourism Administration, these study groups are carefully organised in a responsible manner, enabling the young visitors to learn more about China's culture and history, which is so closely related to Japan's, as well as her current booming economy.

Ancient Village Rediscovered Near Guilin

Guangxi In Southwest China's Guangxi Province, a 1,000-year-old village has recently been discovered. The paths of this ancient village, named Rongjin, were paved long ago with blue blocks now polished to a sheen from centuries of use. The old stages surrounded by giant banyan trees reflect the changes of history, as do the residences which were built with exquisite, decorative windows.

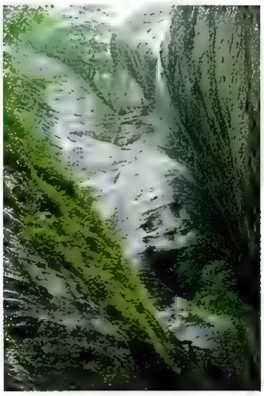
Rongjin Village, situated by State Highway 323 in Zhangjiazhen in Pingle County, is 130-plus km from Guilin. Over 4,000 residents with 10 surnames, including Lu, Ye, Liu, and Gu, live in the village.

As told by the village elders, most of their ancestors came from Guangdong, Hunan and Jiangxi provinces. In Chinese history, Rongjin was famed as a prosperous trading centre. Just before the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, there were 28 commercial shops, and as many as 40 in its prime.

The earliest villagers were monks. In the early Song Dynasty (960-1127), a noted monk, captivated by the picturesque scenery there, made his home in a hut on a duck-shaped hill. Later, he welcomed a few monks from other places and, in time, they collected money from the public to build a temple which was always crowded with pilgrims. Some Guangdong people favoured this place and started to build houses there. Soon, Rongjin became a big salt distribution centre in Guangxi. In its heyday, over 200 stalls on a 700-metre-long street in town sold everything imaginable. Because the city once had 10 banyan trees ("rongshu"), it was named Rongjin, as was the river nearby.

By the time of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Rongjin not only bustled with commerce in the hinterland of Pingle, but was also a place where cultures from the north and south met. During the reign of Ming-dynasty emperor Hongwu, temples and opera houses were in existence.

Mount Wuyi Environmental Rehabilitation



Fujian With an investment of 120 million yuan, the Fujian provincial government will carry out a complete refurbishment of the Mount Wuyi Scenic Area, to effectively preserve tourist attractions in the zone. It will be the first place in China to implement such environmental rehabilitation.

During low tourist seasons, scenic area staff will carry out an overall check on the reserves for natural landscapes and cultural relics, such as the ruins of the ancient Han city, the reserve for plant species and the Nine-Bend Stream. A highway will also be constructed around the scenic area to establish a distinct boundary. After the highway's completion, all vehicles will be prohibited from entering the major scenic spots. Visitors can take a special cart to tour around the area instead.

Shanghai Ocean Aquarium Opens

Shanghai The long-anticipated Shanghai Ocean Aquarium opened on February 5 this year. Costing 55 million U.S. dollars, the aquarium is also Shanghai's largest tourism and culture joint venture, funded by China Poly Group and two Singaporean firms.

As soon as tourists enter the 20,000-square-metre venue, they step into a submarine tunnel nearly 155 metres long. The tunnel and the 28 exhibition zones allow visitors to observe more than 300 species of rare aquatic animals. The aquarium is conveniently located beside the Oriental Pearl TV Tower in Lujiazui.

Opening hours: 9:00-21:00 daily

Admission: Adult: 110 yuan; Child: 70 yuan.

Spring Hunting Tour on the Highland

Qinghai The Dulan International Hunting Ground has become popular with foreign tourists. In 2001, more than 600 hunters from countries such as the United States, Germany, France, Russia and Norway, visited the ground.

Located in Dulan County of the Haixi Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province, the hunting ground is situated on Burhanbudai Mountain at the southern edge of the Qaidam Basin. Its 30,000 square kilometres are home to cliff goats, Tibetan antelopes, red deer and white-lip deer. Most of the antelopes are 13-14 years of age, approaching the average life expectancy of 15. Hunters are allowered to shoot only old and weak animals, while hunting is prohibited during breeding season, from late April to mid-August. By riding hired horses, tourists can better appreciate the stunning natural landscapes in the area.

According to the Qinghai Provincial Wildlife Protection Association, wildlife protection is a priority in the region. A portion of the income received from the hunting ground's admission fees is used for publicity about and protection of wildlife.

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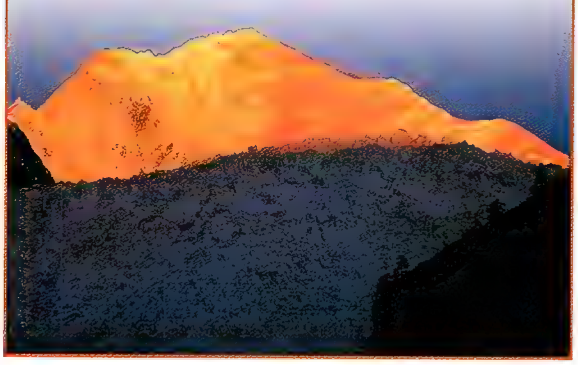
Three More National Geology Parks

Sichuan Following the honour bestowed on its Mount Longmen and the dinosaur site in Zigong as national geology parks, along with nine other geological heritage sites in China named by the Ministry of Land and Resources (MLR) last March, three more places in Sichuan Province have won this title in 2002. The new sites include the Dadu River Canyon, Hailuogou Glacier Hot Springs in Mount Gongga, and the coral reef and karst topography in Anxian County. With five national geology parks, Sichuan now outnumbers all other provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions in the country.

Sichuan boasts numerous mountains and valleys. When the MLR initiated the plan to establish national geology parks in 1999, Sichuan immediately began planning and applying for the heritage site designations. In 2001, it completed the general planning for the development of geological heritage reserves and geology parks within the province. Each of the newly-added national geology parks has its characteristic scenery. Cutting deep into the Hengduan Mountains, the great canyon on the Dadu River is famous for its legend about the Red Army's Long March. Hailuogou, situated in Luding County in Ganzê Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, western Sichuan, boasts the country's biggest glacial waterfall, cascading down for over 1,000 metres and stretching 1,500 metres wide. Meanwhile, the coral reef discovered in Anxian County in the Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, northern Sichuan, is more than 200 million years old, making it the oldest-known such reef in the world.

Furthermore, Sichuan has also applied for the title of provincial geology reserves for certain sites, such as the ancient glaciers of the Four Maids Mountain, the Panxi Great Canyon, the ruins of the barrier lakes in Diexi, geysers in Junlian, and geothermal vents in Batang.



Zhenjiang Honoured by UNESCO

Jiangsu Three historical sites in Zhenjiang, in East China's Jiangsu Province, have been granted Asia-Pacific Cultural Heritage Protection Awards for 2001 by UNESCO. They are the Stone Pagoda, Guanyin Cave and a charitable association hall, all on Xijindu Street. The street joined UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Cultural Heritage list in October 2001.

In recent years, the municipal government has allocated about 7 million yuan (US$ 843,000) to intensify the preservation of these archaeological sites. In 2001, some 200 million yuan in private donations also went towards their maintenance.

New Shopper's Paradise — Breeze Center

Taiwan Completed last October, the nine-storey Breeze Center is situated at the intersection of Fuxing Road South and Shimin Boulevard in Taipei. The mall features both international and Hong Kong fashion labels, such as Miu Miu, Prada, Bally, Giordano, Bossini and G2000. At Food Junction Pier 39, visitors can savour a wide range of Taiwanese delicacies. The Breeze Ambassador Theatres offers the latest international films and a VIP plan entitles members to additional privileges. The open-air Victoria Piazza can accommodate 3,000 people. Various programmes will also be held regularly in the Breeze Center to entertain shoppers.

Add: 39, first section of Fuxing Road South, Taipei

Transport: Take subway to Fuxing Station on Zhongxiao Road and change to a bus going directly to the Breeze Center. Buses run every 10-15 minutes.

Website: http://www.breezecenter.com

East China's Largest Wild Animal Zoo

Hangzhou After nearly two years of construction, the Hangzhou Wild Animal World opened in East China's Zhejiang Province on January 31, 2002. The zoo, in the Fuchunjiang Economic Development Zone in Fuyang City in suburban Hangzhou, is home to more than 10,000 species of animals from South Africa, Australia, Japan and other countries. Covering over 233.33 hectares of land, it is the largest zoo in East China. Since the first wild animal zoo opened in Shenzhen in 1993, about 20 such zoos, including those in Beijing and Shanghai, have opened in China.

World's Biggest Tea Museum Completed

Fuzhou A tea museum recently built in Zhangpu County in East China's Fujian Province is the biggest of its kind in the world. Located in Pantuo Township, the museum covers 5.3 hectares. Its floor space of 8,000 square metres features a major exhibition hall, a Japanese tea ceremony hall, a painting and calligraphy hall and other associated structures. From the exhibits, tourists can learn more about the thousands of years of tea culture history of China and the rest of the world. Demonstrations of the art of making and serving tea and classes in traditional tea ceremony are also offered.

Huaqing Palace Today

Writer: Wu Yangbi

Born in Chenghai, Guangdong Province, he was the supplement editor of Hong Kong's *Wen Wei Pao* before retired. He is the author of the novel *Dragon and Phoenix Sword* and collections of essays: *Fifty Years*, *Talks of the Outlaws of the Marsh*, and *Dragon, Snake, Horse and Goat.*

I was at Huaqing Pool again, for the fourth time. I had not really wanted to go, but was there anyhow. Then, I found I had done the right thing by coming.

My first visit to the pool happened 10 years ago. The place was simple and natural, with few visitors as the tourism industry had just begun to develop. The bathing pool in which the imperial concubine had bathed, did not look like an ancient historical site, but it left with me a good impression. I believed the emperor had made the right choice to rest and take his leisure here.

My second visit was far from favourable. There were crowds of tourists and they did not seem to know why they were there. Huaqing Pool was still the same pool, but part of the place had been screened off for an archaeological excavation. Back home, I read in a newspaper that the true Huaqing Pool where Imperial Lady Yang, the emperor's favourite concubine of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), used to bathe had been found, which explained the screens.

My third visit was also disappointing. Some new buildings had been put up. As I had not seen the overall plan, I could not understand why they were built. It was rather confusing. Again I thought to myself that I should not have come.

However, each time I went to Xi'an, a visit to Huaqing Pool was a must. So I went for a fourth time.

This time, many new buildings had been completed to restore Huaqing Pool to its original splendour. There was a palace of many halls at that time. Behind the Front Hall at the front of the palace, a long corridor leads to the Hall of Eternal Life halfway up the hill, where the emperor and his imperial concubine "confided in whispers in the quiet night". Though not all the buildings had been restored, the locations of the hot springs, such as Agreeable Spring, Crown Prince, Constellation and Nine Dragons, had been confirmed, including a hot spring for the imperial concubine. The emperor, his princes and concubines each had their own hot spring and upon each a small palace had been built. There were still many tourists, but the place did not seem as crowded because there were more scenic spots to see. Visitors also got a clearer idea of the palace from a picture showing what Huaqing Pool was like in the old days. Suddenly there was not enough time to see everything.

As tourism has further developed, many places have completely transformed. The changes made at Huaqing Pool, however, are not without reason. Huaqing Pool was bustling in the old days. As a tourist attraction, it has been restored somewhat to its original shape.

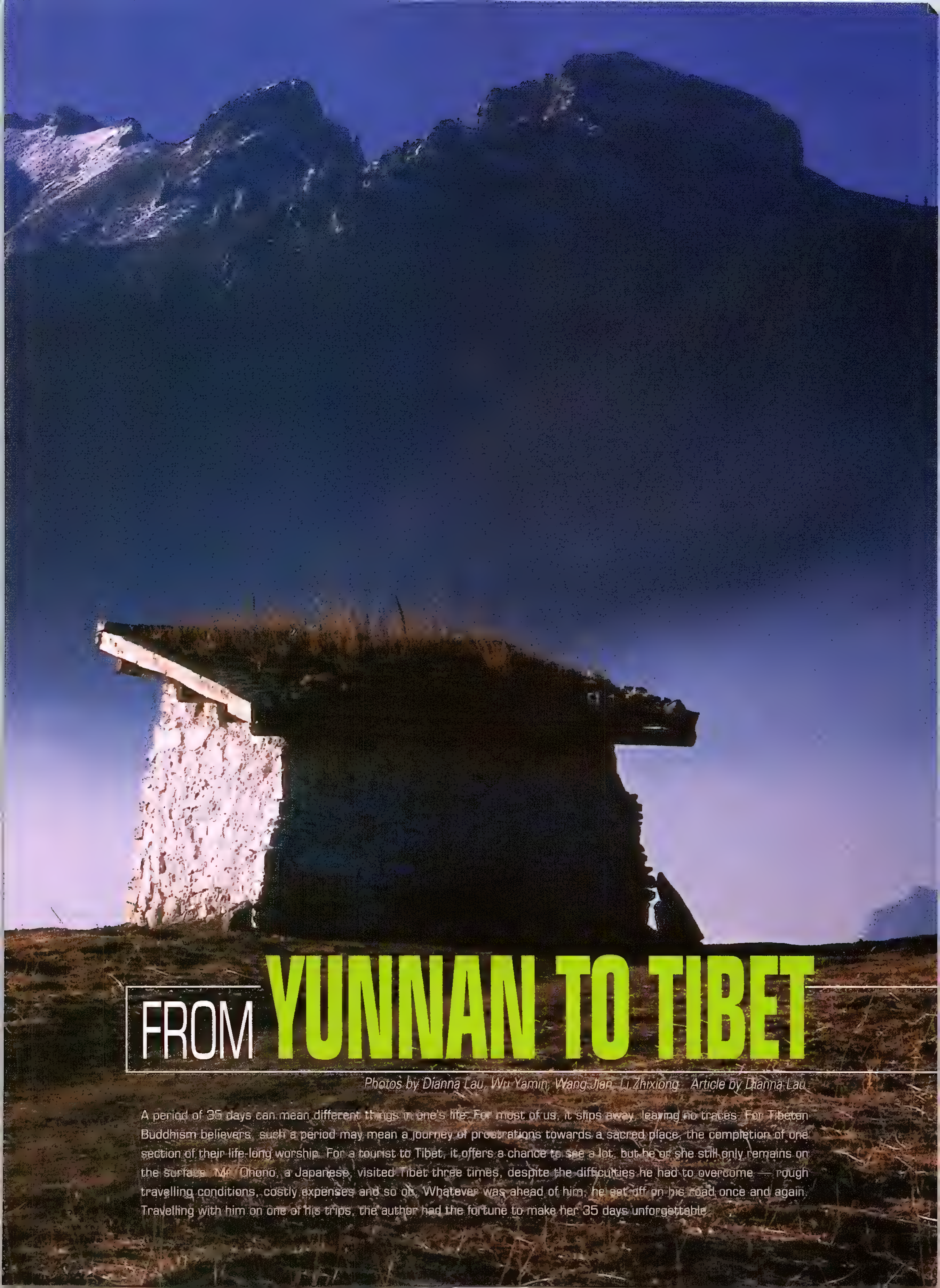
"The palace on Lishan rises to the blue sky, Where immortal music, wafted by the breeze, Is heard everywhere."

These lines by Tang poet Bai Juyi in his long poem "Song of Eternal Sorrow" give only a general impression of Huaqing Pool. Du Mu, another Tang poet, was more specific in "Passing Huaqing Palace":

"From Chang'an I looked back and saw a splash of colours, As the thousand gates leading to the hilltop opened one after another. The imperial concubine smiled when a horse galloped over, Kicking up a cloud of red dust. No others knew that litchi fruit had arrived."

"A splash of colours" and "a thousand gates" describe the many buildings of the pleasure palace on the hill. Fresh litchi fruit was delivered from the south by a fast horse. The imperial concubine smiled as she imagined tasting the delicious, juicy fruit. Du Mu vividly describes the occasion and hints at how the common people felt about this.

When numerous ancient buildings have been restored or rebuilt, enabling people to visualise the past, there is, however, another tendency. These places seem to be there to exhibit the glory and luxurious lifestyles of former rulers and call forth profound feelings of respect, as if people should pay full obeisance when they are there. Actually, such places can be presented in different ways. In a place like Huaqing Pool, a few stone tablets carved with poems like the one by Du Mu can also be displayed, allowing visitors to ponder them.



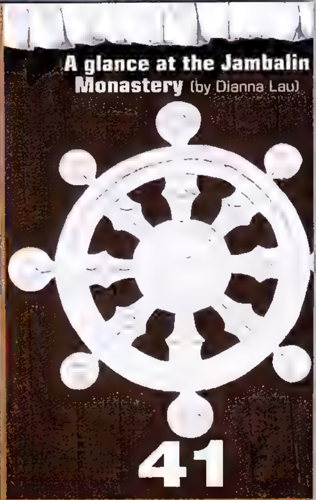
FROM YUNNAN TO TIBET

Photos by Dianna Lau, Wu Yamin, Wang Jian, Li Zhixiong Article by Dianna Lau

A period of 35 days can mean different things in one's life. For most of us, it slips away, leaving no traces. For Tibetan Buddhism believers, such a period may mean a journey of prostrations towards a sacred place, the completion of one section of their life-long worship. For a tourist to Tibet, it offers a chance to see a lot, but he or she still only remains on the surface. Mr. Onono, a Japanese, visited Tibet three times, despite the difficulties he had to overcome — rough travelling conditions, costly expenses and so on. Whatever was ahead of him, he set off on his road once and again. Travelling with him on one of his trips, the author had the fortune to make her 35 days unforgettable.

Fields in Riwoqe
(by He [illegible])

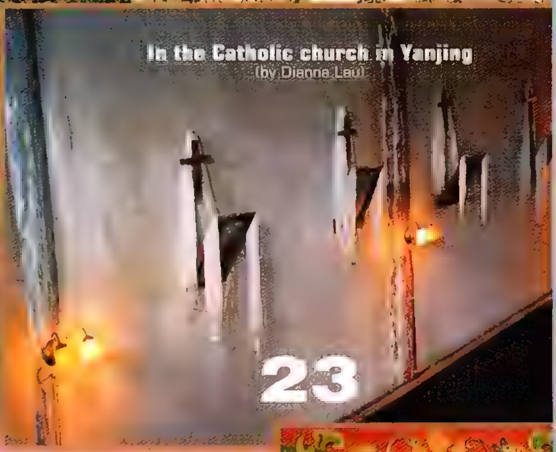
Qomolangma — the top of the world
(by Li Zhinxiong)


A glance at the Jambalin Monastery (by Dianna Lau)

The unique celestial burial ground
(by Yang Yankang)

Shoton Festival at Drepung Monastery
(by Wu Yamin)

Ornaments of the Dengs in Zayu
(by Wang Jian)

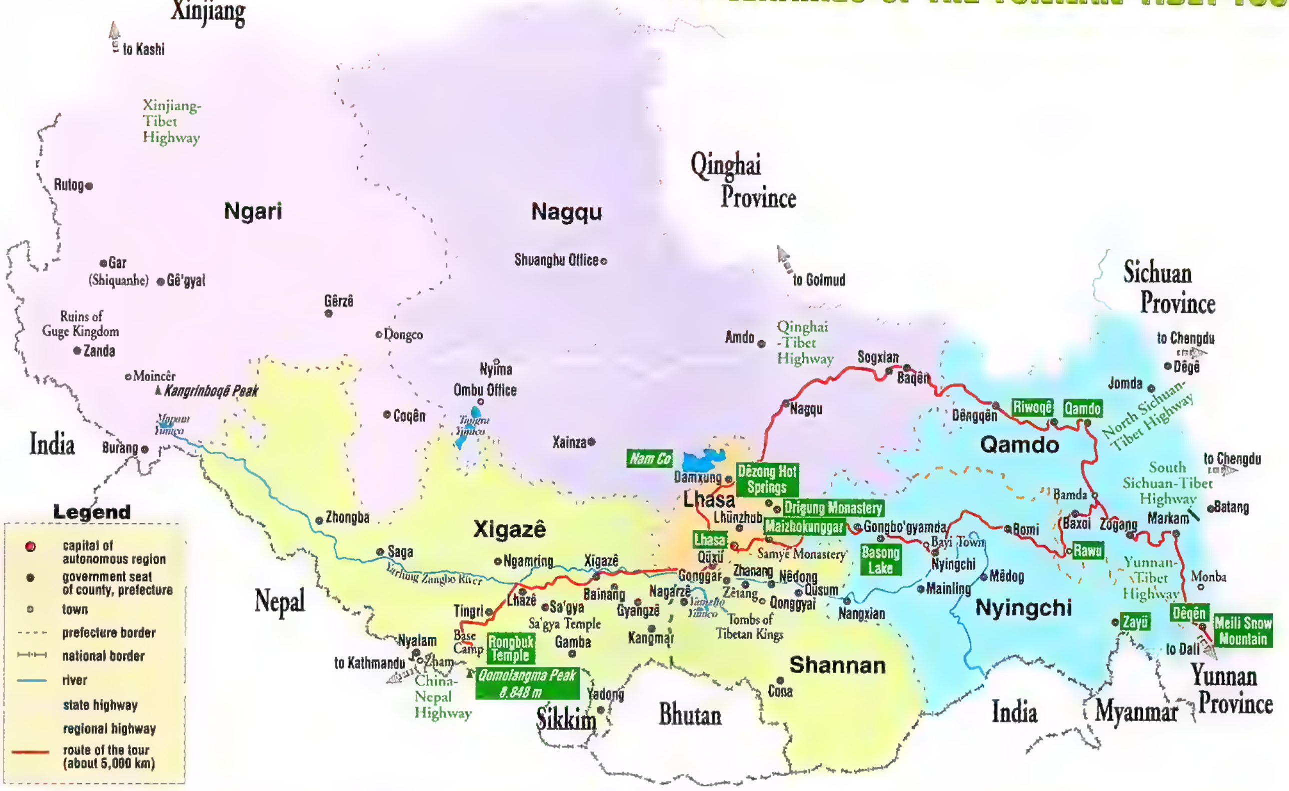

In the Catholic church in Yanjing
(by Dianna Lau)

The thousand-year old Yanjing
(by Li Xi)

Nam Co, the world's highest salt lake
(by Li Zhixiong)

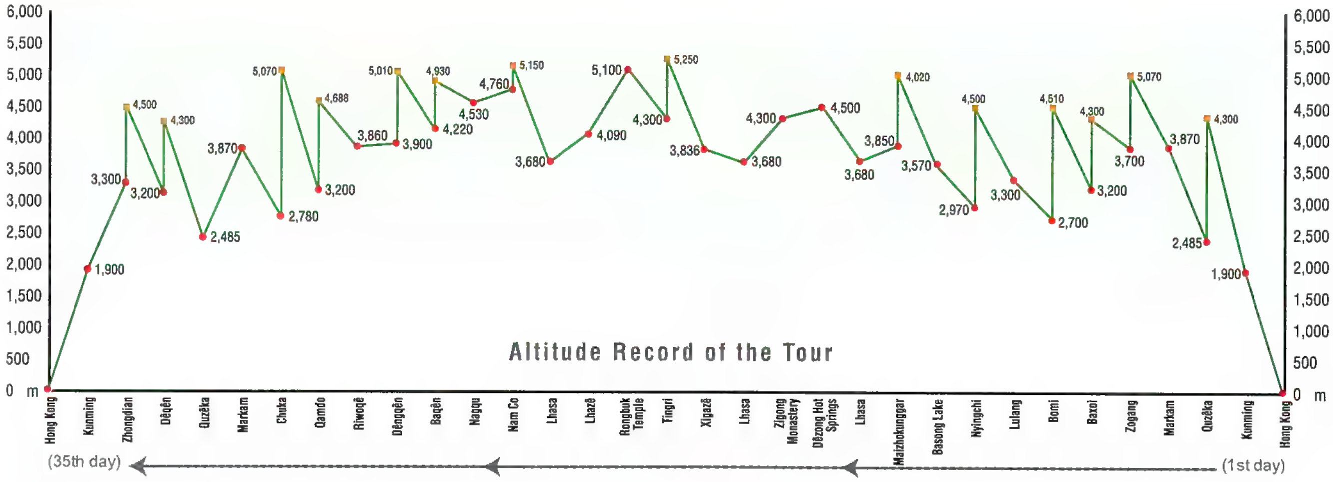
A pillar in the Potala Palace
(by Dianna Lau)

ITINERARIES OF THE YUNNAN-TIBET TOUR


Xinjiang
to Kashi
Xinjiang-Tibet Highway
Rutog
Ngari
Nagqu
Qinghai Province
Gar (Shiquanhe)
Gê'gyai
Gêrzê
Shuanghu Office
to Golmud
Sichuan Province
Ruins of Guge Kingdom
Zanda
Dongco
Amdo
Qinghai-Tibet Highway
Sogxian
Baqên
to Chengdu
Dêgê
Jomda
Moincêr
Kangrinboqê Peak
Nyima
Ombu Office
Nagqu
Dêngqên
Riwoqê
Qamdo
North Sichuan-Tibet Highway
India
Burang
Mapam Yumco
Coqên
Tangra Yumco
Xainza
Nam Co
Damxung
Dêzong Hot Springs
Qamdo
South Sichuan-Tibet Highway
to Chengdu
Lhasa
Lhünzhub
Drigung Monastery
Maizhokunggar
Gongbo'gyamda
Bamda
Batang
Legend
capital of autonomous region
government seat of county, prefecture
town
prefecture border
national border
river
state highway
regional highway
route of the tour (about 5,000 km)
Zhongba
Xigazê
Saga
Ngamring
Xigazê
Yarlung Zangbo River
Lhasa
Qüxü
Samyê Monastery
Basong Lake
Bayi Town
Nyingchi
Bomi
Rawu
Baxoi
Zogang
Markam
Yunnan-Tibet Highway
Monba
Gonggar
Zhanang
Nêdong
Mainling
Mêdog
Nepal
Tingri
Lhazê
Sa'gya
Bainang
Nagarzê
Zêtang
Qusum
Qonggyai
Yamzho Yumco
Nyingchi
Sa'gya Temple
Gyangzê
Tombs of Tibetan Kings
Nangxian
Dêqên
Meili Snow Mountain
Zayü
Nyalam
Base Camp
Rongbuk Temple
Gamba
Kangmar
to Dali
to Kathmandu
Zham
China-Nepal Highway
Qomolangma Peak 8,848 m
Yadong
Sikkim
Bhutan
Cona
Shannan
India
Myanmar
Yunnan Province

Date (35 days)	Route	Accommodation (comments / cost)
Aug 4	Fly from HK to Kunming	Kunming Cuihu Hotel * (well-established / single-bed room: 249 yuan)
Aug 5	Fly from Kunm'ng to Zhongdian	Deqen Taizifeng Hotel * (clean & tidy / 85 yuan and up)
Aug 6	Quzika	Quzika Hot Spring Hotel * (natural environment, hot springs / three-room suite: 220 yuan)
Aug 7	Markam	Markam Chuanli Hotel (simple and clean / three-bed room: 30 yuan)
Aug 8	Zogang	Zogang People's Government Guesthouse (simple and clean / single-bed room: 50 yuan)
Aug 9	Baxoi	Baxoi Postal Guesthouse (simple / double-bed room: 15 yuan)
Aug 10	Bomi	Bomi Home of Friends (simple and clean / single-bed room: 50 yuan)
Aug 11	Lulang	Lulang Hotel * (new facilities / single-bed room: 80 yuan)
Aug 12	Nyingchi	Nyingchi Guesthouse * (quite well-established /double-bed room: 188 yuan)
Aug 13	Basongcum Lake	Basongcum Lake Holiday Village * (nice environment but rooms need updating /single-bed room: 100 yuan)
Aug 14	Maizhokunggar	Maizhokunggar Highland Hotel (simple / four-bed room: 40 yuan)
Aug 15	Lhasa	Himalayas Hotel * (well-established / double-bed room: 450 yuan)
Aug 16	Dezong Hot Springs	Dezong Hot Springs * (natural environment, hot springs / double-bed room : 60 yuan)
Aug 17	Zigong Temple	residence at the mountain foot (very simple / three-bed room: 15 yuan)
Aug 18	Lhasa	Snowland Hotel * (well-established / single-bed room: 250 yuan)
Aug 19	Xigaze	Xigaze Shandong Mansion * (well-established /double-bed room: 300 yuan)
Aug 20	Tingri	Tingri Qomolangma Hotel * (well-established / double-bed room: 310 yuan)
Aug 21	Rongbuk Temple	Rongbuk Temple Guesthouse (simple / four-bed room: 40 yuan)
Aug 22	Lhaze	Lhaze Hotel (simple / single-bed room: 100 yuan)
Aug 23/24	Lhasa	Lhasa Xiangbala Hotel * (well-established / double-bed room: 300 yuan)
Aug 25	Nam Co	Zhaxidao Hotel (simple / double-bed room: 100 yuan)
Aug 26	Nagqu	Nagqu Hotel * (well-established / double-bed room: 320 yuan)
Aug 27	Baqin	Baqin Guesthouse (simple / six-bed room: 40 yuan)
Aug 28	Dingqing	Dingqing Pengsheng Hotel (extremely economical / double-bed room: 60 yuan)
Aug 29	Riwoqe	Riwoqe County Travel Guesthouse (simple / double-bed room: 70 yuan)
Aug 30	Qamdo	Qamdo Hotel * (well-established / double-bed room: 160 yuan)
Aug 31	Zhuka	Zhuka Shiweitian Hostel (simple / three-bed room: 30 yuan)
Sept 1	Quzika	Quzika Hot Spring Hotel * (natural view, hot springs / three-room suite: 220 yuan)
Sept 2/3	Deqen	Deqen Dasheng Hotel * (well-established / double-bed room: 180 yuan)
Sept 4	Zhongdian	Zhongdian Huantai Hotel * (elegant / double-bed room: 260 yuan)
Sept 5	Fly from Zhongdian to Kunming	Kunming Cuihu Hotel * (well-established / single-bed room: 249 yuan)
Sept 6	Stay in Kunming	same as above
Sept 7	Fly from Kunming to HK	Home again!

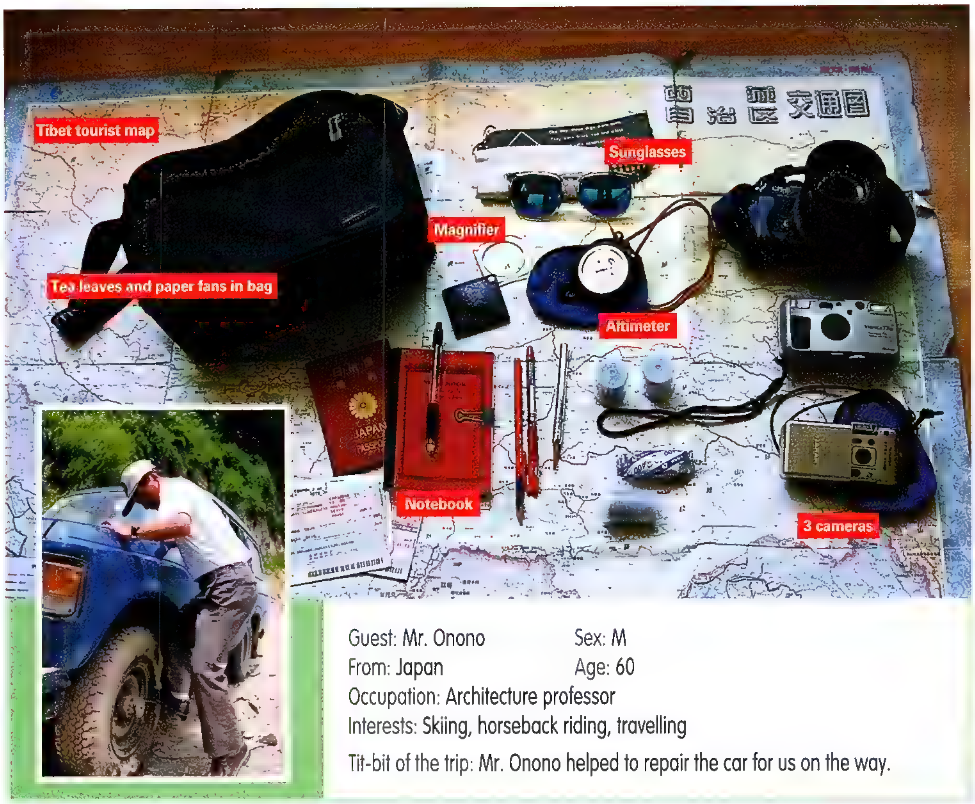
(* Lavatory available in room)



Altitude Record of the Tour

SETTING OFF

[Composition of the Team]
Five teammates: a guest, a translator and tour guide, a reporter, two Tibetan drivers



Guest: Mr. Onono | Sex: M
From: Japan | Age: 60
Occupation: Architecture professor
Interests: Skiing, horseback riding, travelling
Tit-bit of the trip: Mr. Onono helped to repair the car for us on the way.

Expensive photographing equip

Essentials:

Clothing

If you tour Tibet from August to September, the rainy season, pack clothes suitable for all four seasons: thermal underwear (night); short-sleeved T-shirts (noon); long-sleeve cotton shirts (morning and afternoon); long trousers; Gore-Tex jacket; both thin and thick long-sleeved woollen jumpers (night); down jacket (at night in places over 3,500 metres above sea level); sun hat, thick socks, knapsack and waist bag.

Medicines

Besides oxygen bags, you may want to include medicines for flu, stomachache, diarrhea, etc. Such medicines may also be bought in Yunnan and Tibet.

Warning: People with heart disease, respiratory, nervous system or circulation problems are not advised to enter the highlands.

Though small in stature, I am quite healthy. I generally refused to take any medicines to combat physical ailments, relying on willpower instead. The following are some personal experiences:

Case 1 — Altitude Sickness: The heart rate increases at altitudes over 4,000 metres above sea level. Our Tibetan driver rested whenever we stopped on mountain peaks. Simply stepping out of the car at this point made us dizzy. Keep your actions slow and try to contain your excitement while looking at the picturesque view.

Case 2 — Altitude Sickness: Lhasa is only 3,680 metres above sea level, but tourists often get quite worked up at seeing famous scenic spots like Potala Palace and Drepung Monastery. This causes a strain on the heart which can lead to altitude sickness. Remain calm and allow enough time for sightseeing.

Case 3 — Mood Alteration: I am not sure whether a change in air pressure or the lowering of oxygen in the blood can influence one's emotions. I am an easy-going person, but my character changed when I was on the highlands. I became difficult regarding minor things, more sentimental and emotional. To get along well with your teammates, remember to be patient.

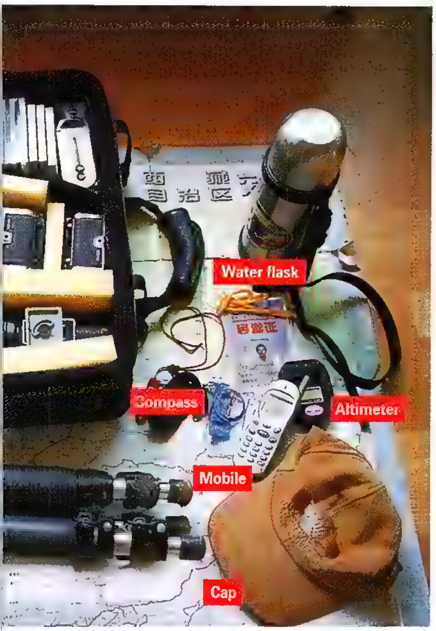
Case 4 — Diarrhea: I had a serious case of diarrhea the morning after our first night spent at the foot of Drigung Monastery. In order to avoid taking medicine, I ate less, only vegetables, and drank hot water. I cancelled my sightseeing plans for the afternoon, rested in my room and wrapped up warmly. That night, I retired immediately after dinner. Before turning in, I spread a special ointment on my abdomen. By next morning, I felt much better.

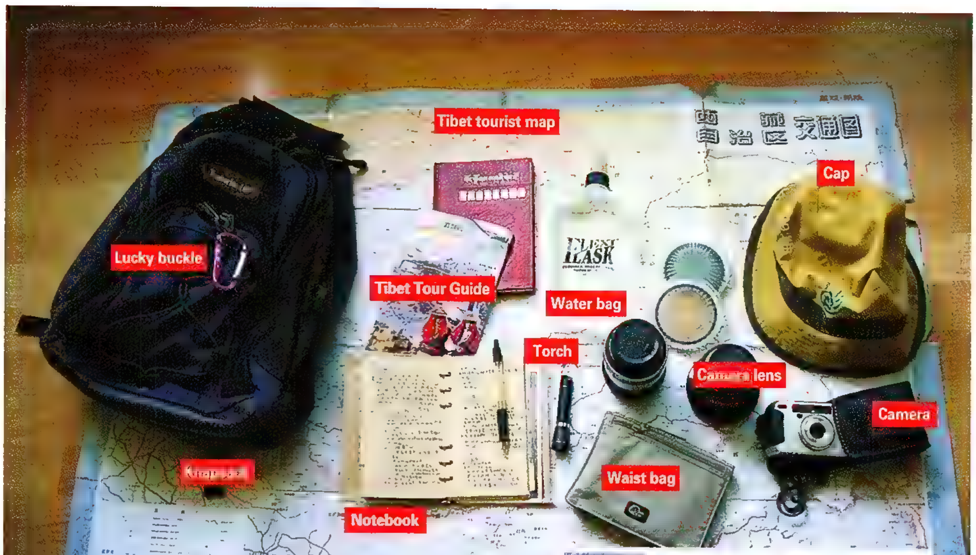
Case 5 — Toothache: It's a little known fact that a toothache will worsen as the altitude increases. For instance, my supposedly cured toothache suffered a relapse during the trip. Whenever I reached a place over 4,000 metres, my teeth began to hurt, and I had to massage my temples to minimise the discomfort. Sometimes it happened at night, leaving me sleepless. Finally, I thought of an unconventional way to alleviate the pain. When the aching began, I told myself, "Great; the pain means that I am still alive, not dead from altitude sickness. I am so lucky to be in a holy place like this!" Dramatically, my pain would disappear. Remarks: The panacea which breaks down all barriers in life is a happy, grateful heart.

Case 6 — Unattached to Rules: To be honest, all of us on the trip did things which

Tour guide: Wu Yamin Sex: M Age: 40+
From: Kunming, China Interests: Photography

Tit-bit of the trip: He was surrounded by curious, hospitable children who were eager to see his camera.





Reporter: Dianna Lau Sex: F
From: Hong Kong Age (of the mind): 12+
Interests: Travelling

Tit-bit of the trip: Easily won the friendship of "peers" in Rawu.

ought to have been detrimental to our health while on the highlands. We drank coffee in the morning, beer in the afternoon and wine (with an alcohol content over 40%) at night, as well as soaked in hot springs. None of us experienced any problems from these activities, which suggests that not everything mentioned is necessarily dangerous at high altitudes. Much depends on one's physical condition and frame of mind.

Others

Body lotion and lip salve are essential for the trip.

Things I packed but did not need: Sterilising hand soap (Tibet's dry climate inhibits bacterial growth and clean water is readily available); tent/sleeping bag (hostels abound); mosquitoe repellent (because Tibet was much drier than Yunnan, insects were not in evidence); sleeveless jacket (the sun was strong, but it was still cool enough on the highlands to require long sleeves); sun block (since we had hired a car, we were not in the sun that much).

Things I did not pack but needed: A stainless steel cup (I had only brought a water bag, which was inconvenient for making coffee, but it is available with reasonable prices on the way); chopsticks (all the eateries offer disposable wooden chopsticks, which are not environmentally-friendly. If you saw the number of trees being cut on the way, you would wish to have brought some chopsticks).

Dining

I had heard that there are no delicacies in Tibet. In fact Sichuan eateries are abundant. Though not exquisitely prepared, the dishes cover a wide range. However, the high MSG content increased my appetite and made my pulse race. I might be the only tourist ever to gain weight after travelling in Yunnan and Tibet!

Answering Nature's Call / Bathing:

In most of Tibet, a washroom and toilet are rarely regarded as necessary facilities. As this is unimaginable to city folk, it was our greatest challenge during the trip.

Tibetans do not need to bathe every day thanks to the dry climate and high altitude. We often did not bathe for days. However, since the dry weather staves off bacteria, missing a bath here and there was not of great concern.

The Tibetans do not understand why anyone would want such a "dirty" thing as a lavatory inside the house. They build toilets far from their houses. In an eatery, if you asked if there was a toilet inside, the staff just looked at you in disbelief.

On rainy days or late at night, there was no light on the way to the lavatories. Worse, a hungry dog might appear before you. Being the sole female on the trip was often inconvenient. Whenever the car stopped, my male teammates could finish their "projects" just by standing, but I had to hide behind a big rock or a thick growth of grass. Since this was time consuming, I was advised to do my business on the ground behind our car. Thus, I had to rush around to the boot soon after they returned. However, sometimes other cars suddenly appeared behind me, or our driver would forget me and start to drive away, completely exposing me. I highly recommend that female travellers take a long dress for privacy. Still, even though the trip was arduous and sometimes awkward, I have many happy memories of doing the "business" in such a special way.

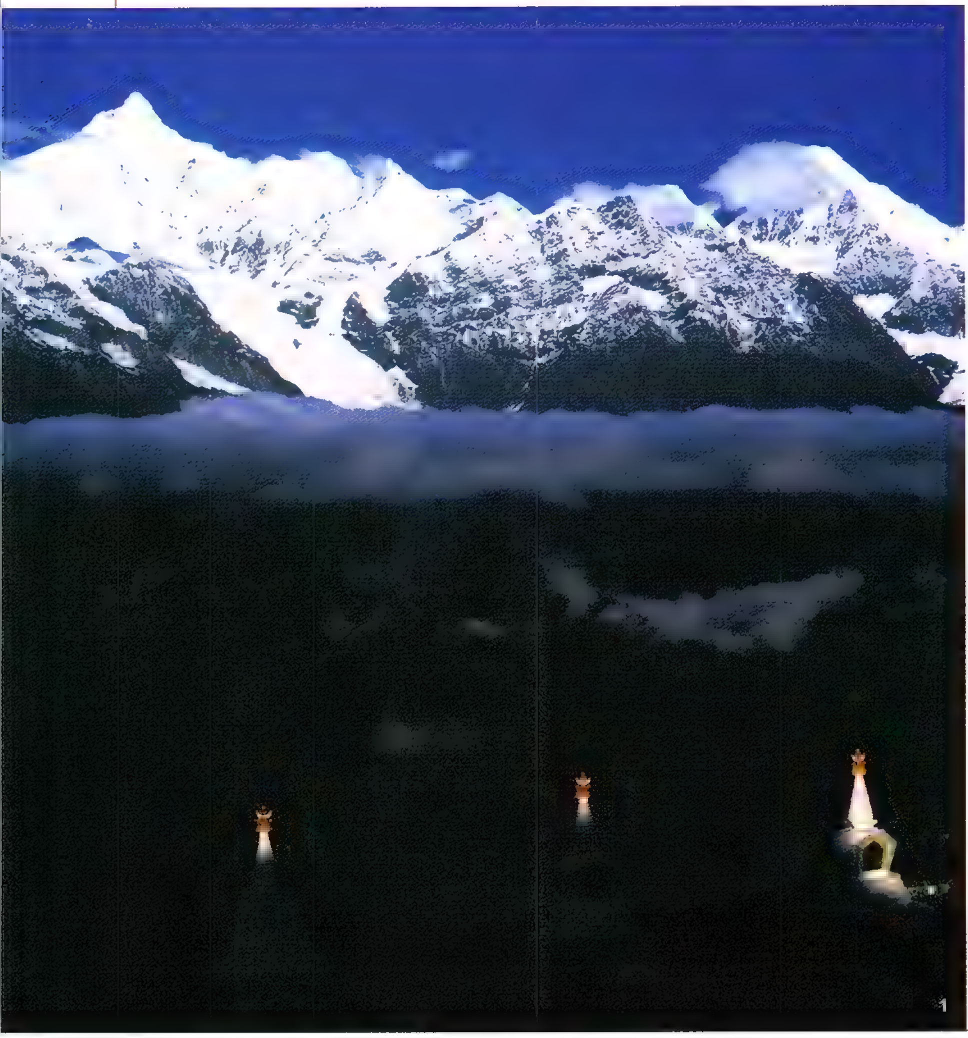
ENTERING EAST TIBET MEILI SNOW MOUNTAIN → MARKAM

I arrived in Kunming in early August to meet the rest of the group. Mr. Wu, the group leader, was tall and strong, looking every inch the professional photographer; Mr. Onono was short, plainly dressed and easy-going, a 100-percent, "down-to-earth" tourist. The group's two drivers had much experience travelling in Tibet and also served as guides.

Running Closely Past Meili Snow Mountain

As our four-wheel drive vehicle raced north along State Highway 214 from Deqen in northwestern Yunnan Province, I kept looking out the window for a trace of Meili Snow Mountain, the "golden pyramid" in the land known as the "Shangri-la". I couldn't quite believe that the sacred mountain, which looks so majestic in photos, was hidden in some white clouds nearby. Regrettably, I was the only one in our group who had not yet seen it.

When we drove along the Lancang River, Mr. Onono became very excited. Several times, he asked the driver to stop so that he could enjoy the vigour of the current. Each time, he would stand there for at least 15 minutes, staring at the river. He said, "Rivers are a key factor dominating the fate of mankind; they can change human history."



Apart from the mountains and streams, Mr. Onono is particularly interested in Chinese food. He had a box of Biluochun tea with him and would make his own tea wherever conditions allowed. Like me, he also likes to eat Songrong mushroom found on the highland. His way of eating the mushroom is unique. After he bought some fresh Songrong, he did not wash them, but gently wiped the mud off and then roasted the slices on a fire. Or he stir-fried them, or simply dipped them in boiling water. In this way, he said, you can enjoy the original taste of the mushrooms.

The Spectacular Tea and Horse Trail

The tea industry emerged in Yunnan in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and eventually became a pillar of the regional economy. Tea produced in Yunnan was world famous, and the Pu'er tea produced in Xishuangbanna in particular, was in high demand. Apart from the domestic market, Pu'er tea was shipped to Tibet and international markets in great amounts. As this tea was favoured by Tibetans who used it to make their butter tea, many trading caravans came from Tibet to Yunnan. They bought tealeaves in Xishuangbanna's Mengla and Fohai (today's Menghai) and sold them in Qamdo and Tibet. The route these merchants travelled on became known as the "Ancient Tea and Horse Trail". We were travelling on the northern section of the former tea and horse trail. It was apparent how difficult it had been for the ancient tea traders to travel through the area with high mountains, deep valleys, torrential rivers and changing weather conditions.

In the 1970s, highways were energetically built and the "caravan culture" declined. Therefore, we would not see any caravans of 400-500 horses travelling here, nor was it possible to witness the imposing bearing of a *daguotou*, or chieftain of a caravan. We saw only a few small caravans of horses and mules conveying grain to some nearby place.

Visit to a 1,000-Year-Old Salt Well

Four hours after passing Meili Snow Mountain, we drove into a deep valley surrounded by towering peaks. A feeling of seclusion took hold of us. In the distance, we could still see segments of the "ancient tea and horse trail" here and there on the mountain ridges beyond the Lancang River. Suddenly, the driver said loudly, "We are now in Tibet!" Mr. Onono and I became very excited. We poked our heads out the windows, but all we saw was a crude signboard for Markam County. There was no any other trace indicating a Tibetan settlement. We drove on at high speed and my heart beat faster. Some 300 metres ahead, we saw a village at the foot of a crimson mountain — Yanjing (salt well), the first important stop on our trip.

In the Lancang River valley, we saw people producing salt in the most primitive way.

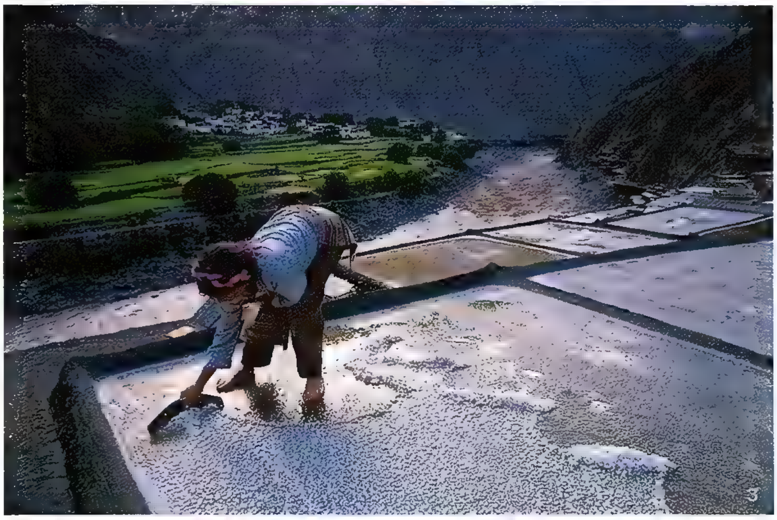
There was no way to know how the salt was discovered here more than 1,000 years ago. Yet, according to *The Epic of Gesar: Battle at Qiangling*, Yanjing had long been a point of contention between Tibetans and Naxis in the region bordering Yunnan, Sichuan and Tibet. The struggle for its domination did not cease until the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). At the end of the Ming and beginning of the Qing, the power of the Naxi chieftain who had controlled the Lijiang area in Yunnan declined and his clan members in the Yanjing area were assimilated by the Tibetans whose authority had grown. Even today, people living in Yanjing still consider themselves Naxis, making Yanjing a Naxi township, the only one in Tibet.

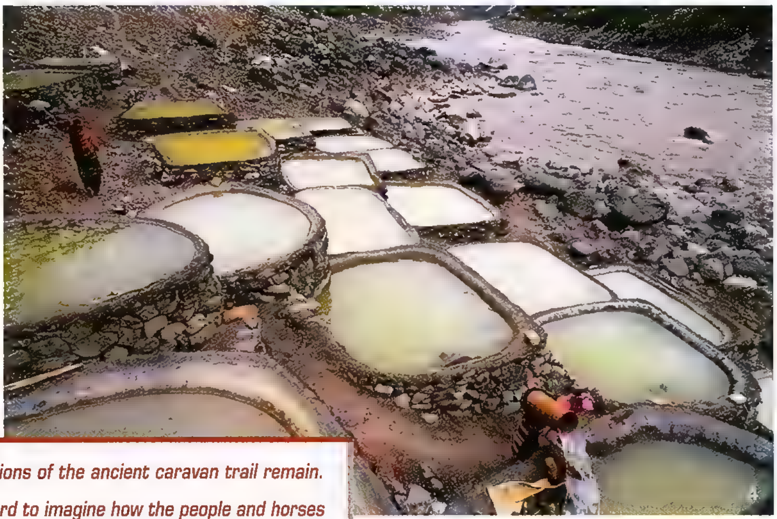
Now, over 200 families in Yanjing still make their living by producing salt, each with their own salt field. They produce and sell the salt themselves.

From March to June, the Lancang River is lower than usual. Moreover, there is ample sunshine and the wind blows heartily. All this makes it the best season for salt production as the highest quality brine is extracted then. After June the rainy season comes. Then, the river level rises, making production more difficult and salt quality poor. The work of sunning the brine for salt is mainly performed by women. In most cases, they go to the brine wells along the river in groups, climb down the wooden ladders to the bottom of the brine wells five or six metres deep, fill their wooden buckets with warm brine and support one another to bring the heavy loads up to the surface. They repeat this, carrying as many as 100 buckets a day.

Around the brine wells are small, honeycomb-like brine containers of cement. First, the women pour the collected brine into the containers. When full, they move it up to a wooden frame to be sunned. As the water in the brine slowly evaporates, the sparkling salt appears.

***Onono Remarks:** Only a few sections of the ancient caravan trail remain. Travelling along the route, it is hard to imagine how the people and horses of long ago managed to pass it.*





Opening page: No other people understand the meaning of life better than the Tibetans. (by Tian Xianguang)

1. **The Meili Snow Mountain, seldom revealed by the mists. (by Wu Yamin)**
2. **Yanjing, situated on the banks of the Lancang River, viewed from the highway up the mountain. (by Dianna Lau)**
3. **Salt crystals appear after the water evaporates. (by Li Xu)**
4. **Women working in their salt fields. (by Li Xu)**

A CHARACTERISTIC CATHOLIC CHURCH

Is it natural to go to a church after returning from the brink of death? You never know what might happen...

At the Brink of Death

Leaving Yanjing at dusk, we continued along the Lancang River. Fallen rocks had covered half of the narrow road. In the dim light, the driver carefully negotiated the tight space. At the same time, Wu put his head out the window to observe the situation. Suddenly, he shouted, "Quick, get out!"

He scared us to death. I was first to leap out of the vehicle as I was sitting on the mountain side. Onono, however, had a bit of trouble. He was in a seat on the cliff side and his safety belt was fastened. Even worse, he did not understand what we were saying. It took him some time to struggle out. When we had composed ourselves, we noticed that the vehicle was wobbling. Beneath it, the road was collapsing and huge chunks of rock were rolling down into the river. If we had not escaped, we might have gone down with the car into the current.

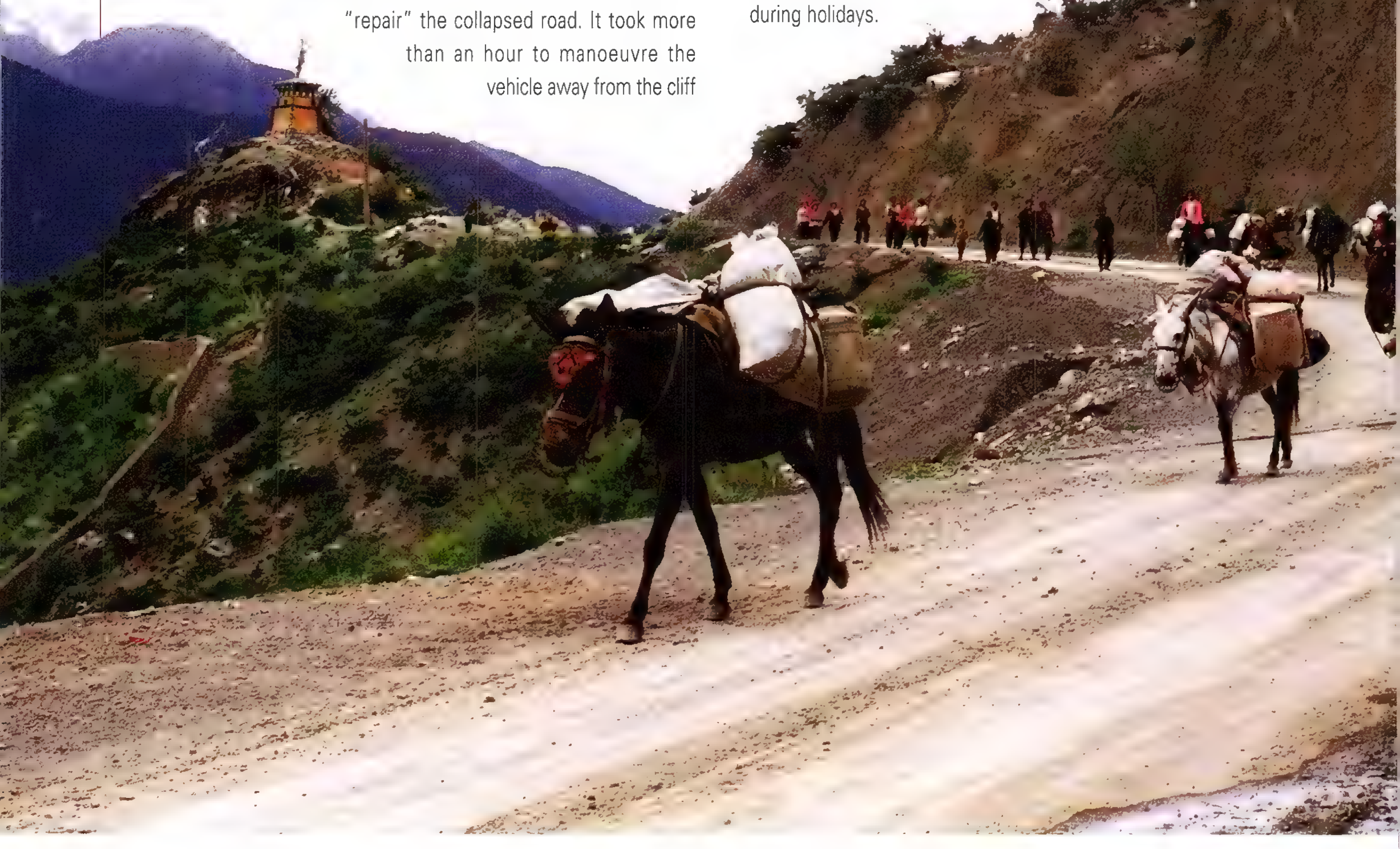
None of us had expected to be brought to the gate of hell at the very start of our journey. When we had all calmed down, we did our best to stabilise the vehicle. Then, we formed a chain to pass rocks to the driver, who strategically placed them in order to "repair" the collapsed road. It took more than an hour to manoeuvre the vehicle away from the cliff edge. Finally, the driver started the engine and drove fast over the "makeshift road" before night fell. After that, Onono no longer fastened his safety belt. As for me, I gave up locking the door.

Yanjing's Catholic Church

Yanjing has Tibet's only Catholic church. Having just escaped the gate of hell, a visit to a quiet church would perhaps be propitious.

The church is in the small Tibetan village of Upper Yanjing. In the early 17th century, a dozen groups of Christian and Catholic missionaries entered Tibetan-inhabited areas via northern India. Obviously, the conflict between Catholicism and Tibetan Buddhism never ceased. Moreover, the local Tibetan government adopted a policy to banish foreign religions. So, we considered ourselves lucky to come across Tibet's sole Catholic church, built in typical Tibetan architectural style, in a remote and secluded mountain valley.

The church was constructed in 1864 by French missionaries. For more than a century, various foreign missionaries were stationed here until the "cultural revolution", when it was turned into a primary school and suffered serious damage. Rebuilt in 1982, it is now looked after by a young priest and an old granny who are helped by two young Tibetan sisters from the Qamdo Seminary for Nuns who come during holidays.



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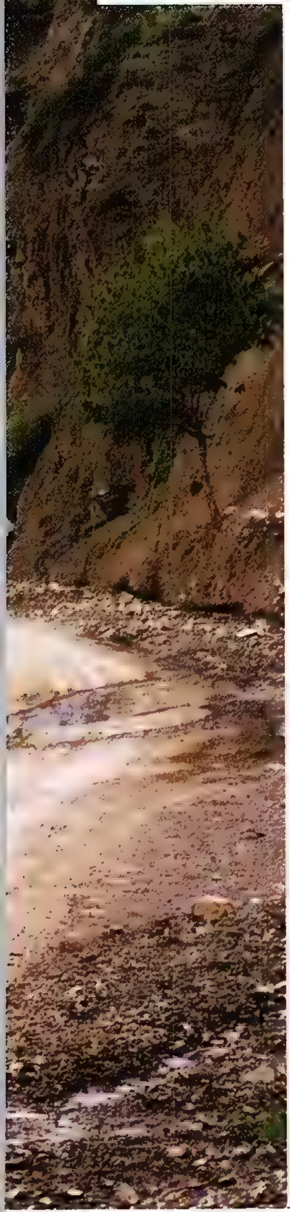
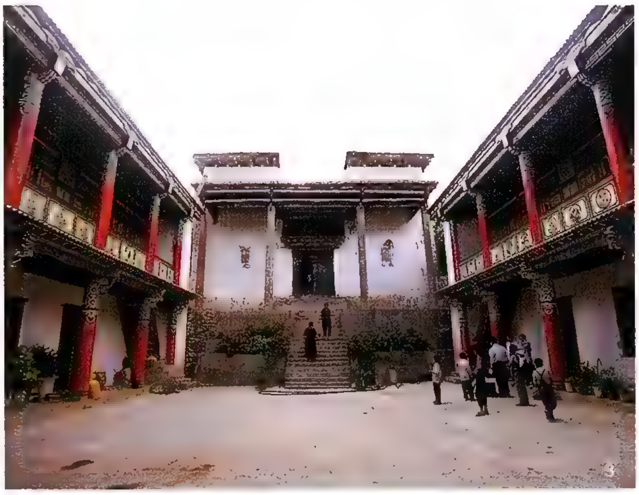
From its outer appearance, I never would have believed it was a true Catholic church. I was only convinced by the Christian murals and the image of Jesus Christ on the altar. Interestingly, however, above each of the murals a hada was hung, adding a uniquely Tibetan flavour.

In Upper Yanjing Village, there are over 600 Catholics, accounting for 60 percent of the residents. Of these, some 200 are quite active. We did not see anyone worshipping when we visited. However, we were told that Mass is held twice a day, in the morning and evening. Most of the attendants are elderly villagers, as the younger ones are busy with work or have gone elsewhere to do business.

Having taken some pictures, we saw many local Tibetans gathered in front of the one-storey houses on either side of the church. At their feet were baskets of fresh grapes. It turned out that it was the church's grape-collection day. The French missionaries had not only brought the Bible to the village but also the knowledge of growing grapes and making wine. Unable to resist the fruity fragrance, Onono and I went directly into the warehouse and opened the barrel. With our left hands, we scooped fresh grapes up to our mouths, and in the right, we cupped the newly-produced grape juice. We must have looked very funny because everyone outside laughed at us while presenting us with still more grapes.

1. A caravan travelling on the Ancient Tea and Horse Trail. (by Onono)
2. Women in Yanjing selling their grapes to the Catholic church to make wine. (by Dianna Lau)
3,4. The Catholic church, its Tibetan-style building and interior decorations.

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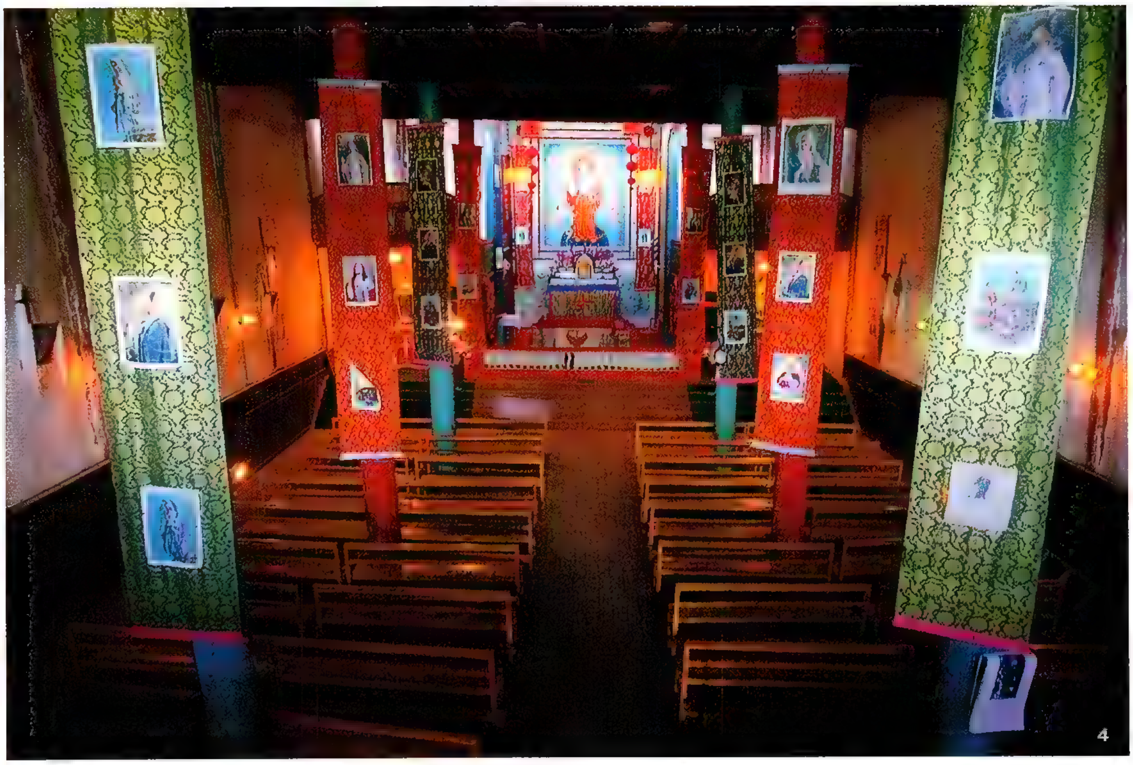
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UNIQUE CUSTOMS OF EAST TIBET RAWU → DRIGUNG MONASTERY

One thing everyone in our group shared was a preference to visit places not geared to ordinary tourists; the more remote, the better. We like to immerse ourselves in unique local customs, whether heartwarming or heart-stopping....

A Birthday to Remember

On our way to Rawu, located southwest of the Baxoi county seat, we had an endless string of troubles. Either the 4x4 broke down or the road ahead of us collapsed. After watching the driver change a tyre almost daily, I had learned how to do it myself.

On August 9, we entered the Tongmai section of the highway, known for frequent landslides. There, the mountain was mostly composed of loose, sandy rock. Landslips were frequent in the rainy season.

As luck would have it, we met with a massive cave-in that day. Earth and rock fell down and blocked the road, creating an endless queue of traffic. While the highway maintenance crew worked hard to move rocks the size of houses, we could do nothing but adjust to a long wait. Starting from 1:30 p.m., we waited there for seven hours. With nothing to do, we killed time consuming all kinds of goodies we had brought — compressed biscuits, peanuts, chocolate, dried beef, fruit, tea, coffee and beer. When night fell and the blue sky disappeared, the last explosion was heard down below. With a long sigh, Wu said that he had never expected to celebrate his birthday this way.

Onono Remarks: *That day, 13 explosions were made to blow away the fallen rocks. Amidst the blasts, we toasted Mr. Wu to wish him a happy birthday.*

Lovely Tibetan Children

According to our original plan, we were to camp that night on the bank of Rawu Lake, 3,807 metres above sea level. Unfortunately, however, we were stopped by highway maintenance workers at the entrance to the lake. They told us that, because of heavy rain over the past two days, the water level had risen and submerged a coach there... Yet, we were so captivated by the enchanting scenery that we decided to take the risk. True, as the workers told us, the road was unbelievably difficult. We guessed that we might not make it as the road was so rugged that the vehicle could turn over at any time. Finally, for safety's sake, we gave up our plan.

Getting out of the vehicle, we surveyed the alpine lake formed by melting ice from the Lagu Glacier. Suddenly, the clear laughter of children came from the green fields of crops. Following it, we reached a nearby village. The moment we got to the entrance of the rather primitive settlement, we were greeted by a large number of Tibetan villagers, some old, some young, all of them looking at us with curiosity. Although we could not easily understand one another, the camera helped us communicate. How could

I resist the fresh faces of the lovely children? In no time, I used up two rolls of film. The kindhearted Tibetans vied with one another to invite us into their homes to visit and take pictures.

The little children seemed drawn to me and we quickly became friends. I joined them in a game with a piece of rock. They played and laughed heartily. I could not tell whether it was because they really enjoyed the game or just that in their innocence they were easily satisfied.

Bidding them farewell, I donned my heavy backpack and laboured up the mountain slope, at an altitude of 3,800 metres, to where our vehicle was parked. Seeing me struggle, they raced up and offered to carry the pack. Of course, I gently refused. Then, they gathered behind me, using their small hands to hoist up the pack to reduce the weight on me. I was so touched by their sincerity that tears came to my eyes.

The Granary of Tibet

After we left Rawu and continued driving towards Nyingchi, the altitude suddenly dropped by more than 1,000 metres. The temperature turned warmer, as evidenced by the changing views, and the brownish-grey mountains were suddenly replaced by lush forests and river valleys. No wonder many people compare it with the Yangtse River Delta in East China. We were told that halfway from Nyingchi to Lhasa there was a beautiful lake called Basong; in the centre of the lake was an ancient monastery of the Nyingma Sect of Tibetan Buddhism built in the 17th century. In the fourth month of the Tibetan calendar a grand ceremony is held there to celebrate the Lake Circling Festival. We decided to pay it a visit. On our way, we passed a small, nameless village. We only took some pictures of its old fortresses and the Gongbu people living there. We hoped to get to Basong Lake to photograph the sunset. The road conditions to the lake were so poor that we were tossed about in the vehicle for three hours. We had to protect the expensive photography equipment on our laps. Nevertheless, we managed to arrive in time to photograph the sun setting behind snow mountains.

1. **Zayu is likened to the Yangtse River Delta. (by Yuan Xuejun)**
2. **Gongbu men living in Bomi, whose clothing is different from the other Tibetans. (by Chen Yu)**
3. **Lovely children in the village of Rawu. (by Wu Yamin)**
4. **To reach the Cuosong Temple on the island in Basong Lake, you have to cross a floating bridge built of single logs. (by Dianna Lau)**

ZAYU PEOPLE LITTLE KNOWN TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD

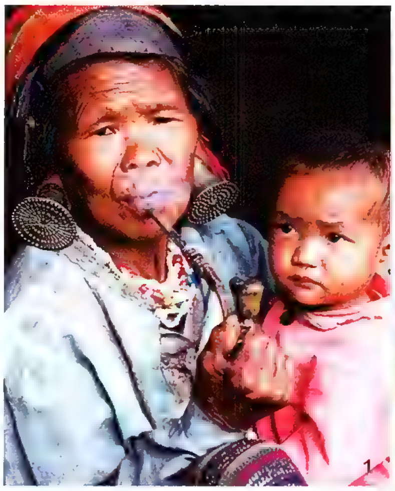
Photos & article by Wang Jian

Zayu is an area in southern Tibet, bordering Myanmar. The Deng people living there have their unique culture, but have yet not been officially identified as an ethnic group.

Under the jurisdiction of Nyingchi Prefecture, Zayu is situated on the southern slope of Demula Snow Mountain. To its east are the Hengduan Mountains in Yunnan, to its west is the Yarlung Zangbo Great Canyon in Mêdog, and in the south it borders India and Myanmar. Topographically, the county is high in the north and low in the south, with an average altitude of 2,300 metres. Lower Zayu Township has a mild, subtropical climate year round. Hence, the local saying: "Apart from salt and gold, anything can be grown in the fields." Totally different to the scenery of the northern Tibet plateau, which features snow mountains and grassland, Zayu offers green and luxuriant forests and villages on gentle slopes. The mountains here are covered with huge, ancient trees, and in the misty valleys you see cascading waterfalls and giggling streams. In addition, you often glimpse a glacier stretching into a lush, emerald forest.

Identification of the Deng People

The Deng people used to live in the forest on high mountains and make their living by hunting. In the 1960s, the government moved them down from the mountains and built villages for them in flat lands in the valleys. Gradually, the Dengs got used to farming life. Now, living in nine rural villages in the Upper and Lower Zayu townships are some 2,000 Dengs, with their own unique traditions and customs. They also have their own language, which belongs to the Tibetan-Burmese branch of Tibetan-Han family, but they do not have a written alphabet. They record everything by tying knots or carving marks on wooden boards. As they do not count the years, it is impossible for them to tell their ages. These days most of them understand Tibetan and Han Chinese and celebrate the Tibetan New Year. However, they have not converted to Tibetan Buddhism. Still embracing their own primitive religion, they believe in ghosts but not gods. In front and at the rear of their residences, there are posts hung with wooden symbols in the shapes of ox, horse, or sword, to drive away ghosts. Moreover, they have kept their hunting tradition alive, with winter being the ideal season to stalk game. Usually, they go in groups. Before they set out, they invariably invite a necromancer to choose an auspicious date and decide the direction they will take to ensure a successful hunt.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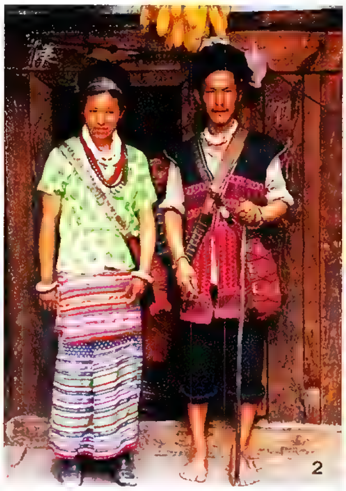
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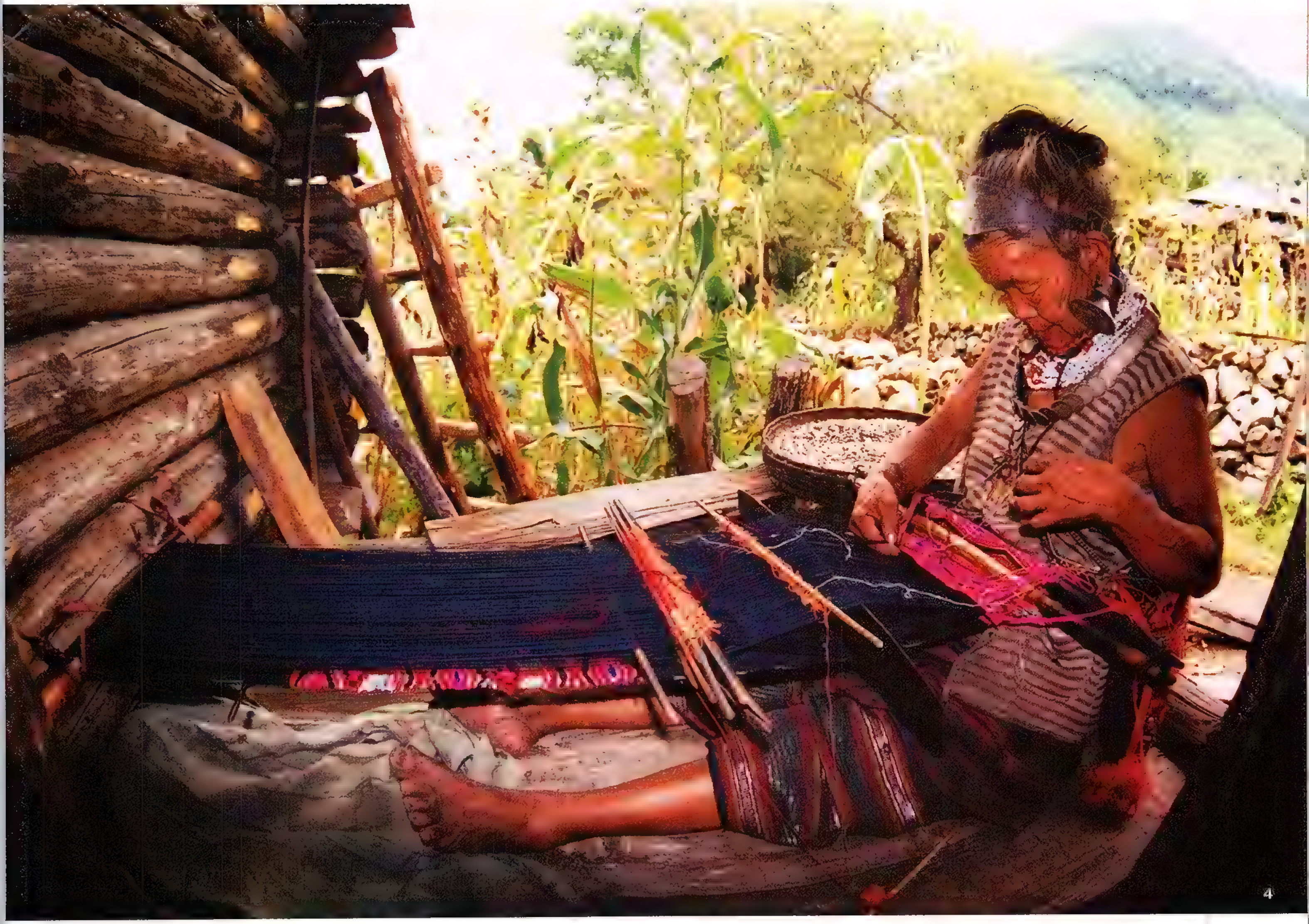
Wedding Customs

For Han Chinese, a wedding must be held on an auspicious day. The Deng people, however, treat it casually, so long as it is in the slack farming season. Still, a wedding is always the most joyful event in the entire village. Usually, the groom's family sends a certain number of oxen and sheep to the bride's family, while the head of the bride's family gives the groom a shotgun, bullets or farming tools in return. According to tradition, the oxen and sheep are slaughtered and used to treat all the villagers. Now, the government has ruled that of the oxen sent only the old and weak ones can be slaughtered, in order to prevent a reduction in the number of farm cattle. The people argue that their habit of sending livestock is similar to the Han Chinese practice of giving betrothal gifts, as most families do not have much money. Nowadays, those who do have wealth give money instead. Most Deng families are monogamous, but polygamy also exists.

Clothing and Adornments

The clothing of the Dengs is unique. The men wear sleeveless jackets, sport knives at the waist and carry bags made from animal hides on their backs. They also wear white or black headscarves. The custom that "a Deng man never parts from his knife" is possibly inherited from their former hunting life. The women wear short-sleeved blouses and colourfully striped skirts. Over the forehead, they wear an oval-shaped, silver hair band called a *gebeng*, and hung round their necks is a kind of chain called a *bawendegang*, which is made by connecting pieces of something like walnuts, 20 in all. Older women usually wear huge, drum-shaped earrings called *goudabai*. Their chaplets and bag straps are made of silver coins, and their silver bracelets are large and meticulously crafted.



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Utopian Style of Life

The Deng people are fond of tobacco and liquor. They grow a kind of tobacco called *dewang*, which, when baked or sunned dry, is very strong. Older women, in particular, favour smoking. They are never without a pipe, which is 33 cm long and beautifully made of silver, just as the men never part from their knives. The Dengs use half of their crops to produce liquor. One such liquor, called "mapolao", is made from rice. Others include low- and high-alcohol qingke barley wine. Liquor is indispensable when they play host to guests. Traditionally, whenever they entertain, they slaughter chickens. The legs and better meat are roasted and the remaining bits are used to make soup. Both the soup and the roasted chicken are served together with rice which is eaten with the fingers. When a guest is entertained, his or her plate of rice must be refilled twice and the bowl of soup can be refilled indefinitely, and the chicken legs served must be eaten.

The climate and soil conditions in Zayu are superb. In the same plot, different kinds of tropical, subtropical and temperate zone plants and crops, such as apple and papaya, peach and litchi, as well as rice and corn, can grow together. As all crops, from rice and sorghum to potato and buckwheat, grow well in Zayu, the locals have no worries about food. They are also well clothed as they have a long tradition of weaving cloth from wild hemp fibres.

Deng people are kind and unsophisticated. They neither shake hands with nor kowtow to others. Instead, they exchange things with strangers to show friendliness. Because of their long hunting lifestyle, there is no sense of hierarchy among them; neither is there an obvious gap between rich and poor. Whenever something concerns the whole village, the villagers discuss it together. To "modern" people, they seem to live in a utopia hidden deep in the mountains.

1. **Elderly Deng women like to wear big, drum-shaped earrings and smoke a strong tobacco.**
2. **Characteristic clothes of the Deng men and women.**
3. **The Dengs are good at bamboo handicrafts. The bearskin bag is important for a man: when he has more than one wife, he hangs his bag at the door of the wife he intends to stay the night with.**
4. **The traditional weaving technique is still used by the Deng women.**

FOUR HOURS IN THE CELESTIAL BURIAL GROUND

Photos & article by Dianna Lau

(Caution: Following is a detailed description of the celestial burial process. Readers should prepare themselves psychologically before reading on.)

Planning for the future is like fishing in a dry, bottomless abyss;
No matter how hard you work, you will not get what you want.
Better give up all schemes and ambitions!
If you want something to think about,
Please think about your unsettled, inevitable hour....

— Drash Rinpoche (from *Book of Life and Death in Tibet*)

An Unexpected Trip

One of the major events during our journey was to watch the annual grand event of "Sunning the Big Buddha" held on August 18 in Lhasa. After arriving in Lhasa, we added two unexpected events.

On the first day, we drove five hours along a very rugged road to reach Dêzung Hot Springs, at 4,500 metres above sea level. There, I had my first "deathly experience" of taking a hot spring bath alone at such an altitude with a stomach full of beer.

The second day, we drove back on the same road for 40 minutes to a small village at Drigung Mountain. Having spent the night in a simple, crudely built house in the village, we went up the mountain early next morning to watch a celestial burial.

At 6 a.m., we drove up the mountain in the dark. At the Drigung Monastery we got out of the 4x4 and walked to the famous celestial burial platform at the back of the mountain. (It is said this is one of the two famous celestial burial platforms in the world. The other one is in India.) The sun still hid behind thick clouds at seven o'clock and the morning chill lingered. We walked on in silence, followed by people carrying six corpses, which would be given a celestial burial that day.

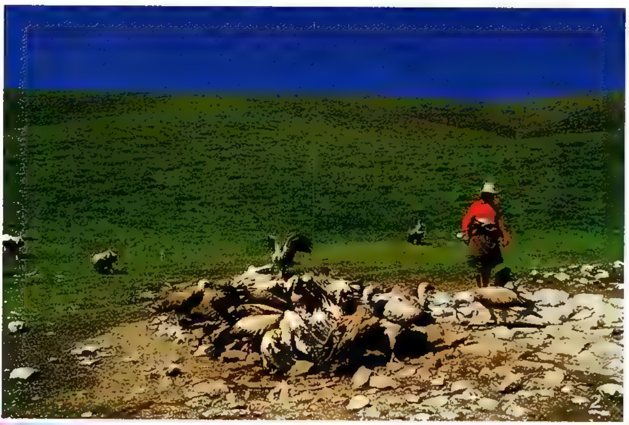
It is said that in the night prior to a celestial burial, lamas in the monastery perform a last service for the dead to help their souls be completely released from their bodies and go on to a new realm, leaving the bodies to be turned over to eagles.

We were allowed to enter the celestial burial platform at eight o'clock only after we handed in all our belongings. No photos are allowed in order to show respect for the dead.

Amidst the sutra chanting of several young lamas, those carrying the corpses walked clockwise round the celestial burial platform, which was built from huge blocks of rock. The sound of several celestial burial masters grinding their knives and the voices of the young lamas mixed and echoed in the quiet surroundings. At that moment, the Tibetans set fire to some cypress twigs they had collected and the smoke emitted became a signal for the eagles to come to perform their duties. In no time, some 60 eagles, each a metre tall, landed in a neat queue on a nearby slope. In front of them, a man waved a long cord to chase away those impatient to begin.

At This Special Moment

When the knives were sharpened, the celestial burial masters and three young assistants, each carrying a knife and hook, approached the hemp sacks containing the corpses and pulled them onto the 100-



square-metre stone celestial burial platform. Then, they adroitly cut open the sacks to reveal the dead bodies. The bodies had already turned dark, giving off a disgusting odour. The moment the bodies were revealed, my blood vessels expanded to their fullest and my heart beat very fast. I saw that the few, departed "friends" had the same organs as everyone else; their eyes and mouths were open and their bodies were contorted, seeming to tell us their life stories.... I fixed my eyes on the celestial burial masters, as they manoeuvred and cut the bodies. The first cut fell on the sole, as if to sever the link to the mundane earth. The following incisions fell on the back, thorax, thigh, calf, hands and scalp. From the first cut, I felt as if the knife sliced my own flesh, a feeling that only disappeared once the corpses were dismembered into small pieces. Then, I suddenly came to an understanding: Our bodies, which we treasure so dearly while alive, invariably come to nil someday. Pitifully, we do not have the least idea when this day will arrive. In fact, what we control in our lives is next to nothing. Yet, we live on arrogantly, making great efforts to pursue all types of uncertain goals.

In about 20 minutes, the whole area was redolent of a bloody smell. All the men in our group could not stand the stench any longer and smoked cigarettes to cover up the strong odour and try to relax. The hungry eagles also fidgeted on the mountain slope. One man was scolded by the celestial masters when he spoke loudly to his friend, because his voice might be mistaken by the eagles as a signal to start. They would rush down the slope to compete for food, disrupting the normal order. Because of the chill, I stayed by the fire. When I saw it was starting to go out, I blew on the embers. I was immediately stopped by some Tibetans nearby who said the sudden change in the amount of smoke also meant something to the eagles. At this juncture, a few children, between six and 10, breezily walked up. They stopped not far from me, eating sweets and regarding the scene casually. At a certain point, the relatives of the dead gave each of them some cash, and this made them very happy.

The Eagles Were Ready

The first round of cutting was finally over and the celestial burial masters signalled the eagles to enter the ground to feed. First, one eagle came down to the platform tentatively and had the first bite. Then all its companions rushed in, descending upon the body parts, sharing their food with huge bites. In less than half an hour, nearly all the flesh was devoured, leaving only vaguely recognisable skeletal segments. The eagles then dispersed reluctantly; it seemed they had not had enough.

The celestial burial masters started the hard second round of work — chopping and crushing the bones. Along the edges of the platform were several metre-high stone chopping boards, the surfaces of which were curved in with use. First, the three young assistants picked up the bigger bones, smashed them with stone hammers on the boards and threw the crushed pieces onto the platform. Whenever a part called for meticulous care, they handed it to the senior masters. Whenever there was a beautifully shaped calf bone, the masters would examine it carefully, set it aside and later make it into a "human bone flute" (30 cm long and wrapped in parts with silver or copper foil, producing a sharp, high-pitch sound).

The children standing near me continued to eat their candy. Looking at me and at the piece of bone on the ground, they turned and left. Instead, I silently recited the Six Words Sutra, wishing the deceased good luck in my heart.

The Meaning of Life

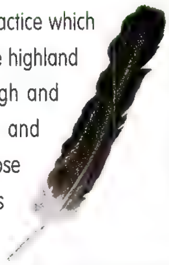
One hour had elapsed when the last piece of scull was crushed. With it, the celestial burial masters had finished their duties. Sweating profusely, they sat down to rest, while we onlookers shivered with cold. All the while I had stood there, my mind seemed to be blank; yet many things that had happened in my life came back.... Eventually, the stinging smell pulled my thoughts back to reality, and I tried every way to cover my mouth and nose. Then, my mind again wandered, to the future, and again the spraying bits of bone called me back to the present. Past, present and future — that is life and that is what I learnt about the meaning of life while watching the bodies of the dead being cut up and smashed and fed to the birds.

Buddha says that life lies in breath. The true purpose of life is to "live for now".

The celestial burial masters gave a shout and the flock of eagles rushed to the platform once again. Among them were a few crows that had waited there for a long time. The eagles and crows joined efforts to clean the platform in one last round. Then, the entire ceremony came to an end.

As I walked out of the celestial burial ground, a feather lightly landed on my head. It was 50 cm long. This was what the Creator bestowed on eagles to help them keep their balance and direction. I believe humans also have such natural endowments enabling them to stay on the path toward their own goals. Maybe vulgar, worldly affairs make us forget how to live, love and keep direction in life....

Celestial burial is nothing mysterious but a practice which emerged in line with natural conditions on the highland where the Tibetans lived. Where the altitude is high and temperatures are low, it is difficult to dig a grave, and cremation requires too much wood. To let the birds dispose of the dead bodies is a wise solution, though dagobas and cremations are reserved for high-ranking monks.



1. Streamers with sutra inscriptions are hung everywhere in Tibet, which the Tibetans believe can help cleanse their environment and their souls.
2. Eagles are respected in Tibet because of their important role in the celestial burial.

ROAMING ABOUT LHASA FOR HALF A DAY

With only half a day in Lhasa, I chose Barkor Street and gave up on the Potala Palace.

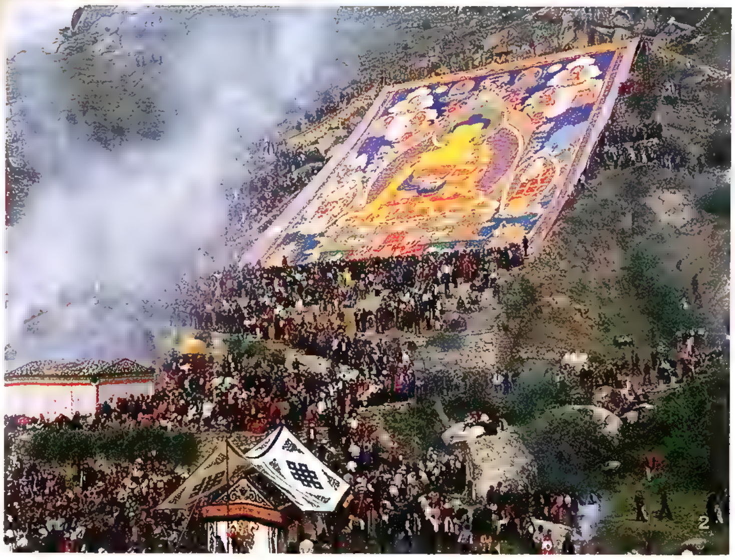
The Shoton (Yoghurt) Festival started on August 19th last year. So we rushed back to Lhasa.

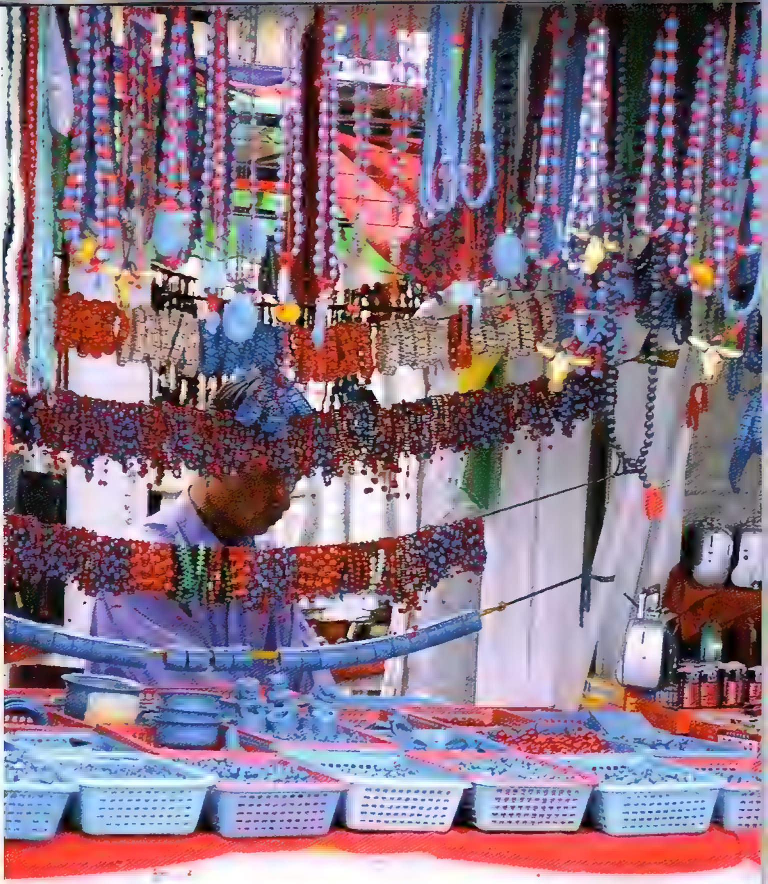
Unlike in the past, the Shoton Festival is no longer an event during which the Lamas who had fasted for several months may gather donations of yoghurt from the populace. It has developed into a grand event to attract tourists. Visitors from all over the world as well as local Tibetans rush to the Drepung Monastery early in the morning and crowd into every corner, making the entire hill a lively place. The only things that muffled the enthusiasm of the tourists were confusion about transport and some unhygienic practices.

With great effort, we struggled through the crowds up to the top of a hill opposite the "big Buddha". Already, a large number of photographers had gathered, carrying various kinds of equipment. Many were photography teams from different TV stations. Looking down from the hilltop, I saw a large number of Tibetans sitting on the mountain slope below, enjoying food and butter tea in family groups. A performance of Tibetan Opera featuring strange masks also attracted many onlookers, among whom were quite a few foreigners. I did not have the patience to stand still for very long, so I roamed about in the multitude, taking pictures of people exhibiting various postures and expressions.

Mixing in the crowd and inhaling the smoke from the cypress twig fires, I had difficulty breathing. So, I followed the tide of people going down the mountain.

1. **A group of road builders sing and dance while working. (by Onono)**
2. **The grand Sunning the Buddha ceremony held yearly at Drepung Monastery. (by Wu Yamin)**
3. **Numerous devoted pilgrims come to prostrate in front of the Potala Palace. (by Dianna Lau)**





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Visiting Barkor Street, an Enjoyable Experience

In Tibet, Mr. Onono and I had to stick closely to our guide because many places were not yet open to "overseas visitors" (i.e., anyone not from the mainland). If we were to travel alone in such an area, we might cause suspicion and be questioned. As for the consequences, they could possibly be quite serious.

Fortunately, there was Barkor Street in Lhasa, where I spent half a day's free time. If I had only half a day to tour Lhasa, I would choose Barkor Street over the Potala Palace. Barkor Street is closely related to Jokhang Temple; that is, it gradually came into being along with the construction of the temple. With the addition of palace structures, houses for monks and laymen, the place has gradually turned into the liveliest area of Lhasa. In the street, there are various shops which tourists frequent for all kinds of souvenirs, such as tangka, silverware, clothes and medicines. In the morning, it is interesting to tour the street and bargain with shop owners. In the evening, you can watch pilgrims circling around while chanting sutra.

I simply could not believe my eyes when I found the Maji Amishi Western Food Restaurant on the second floor of a building at a street corner. Before sunset, I took a window seat and ordered a cup of strong coffee and a piece of delicious carrot cake. Then, I looked out at the tourists whose shadows were elongated by the setting sun and wished that my stay in Lhasa could be extended....

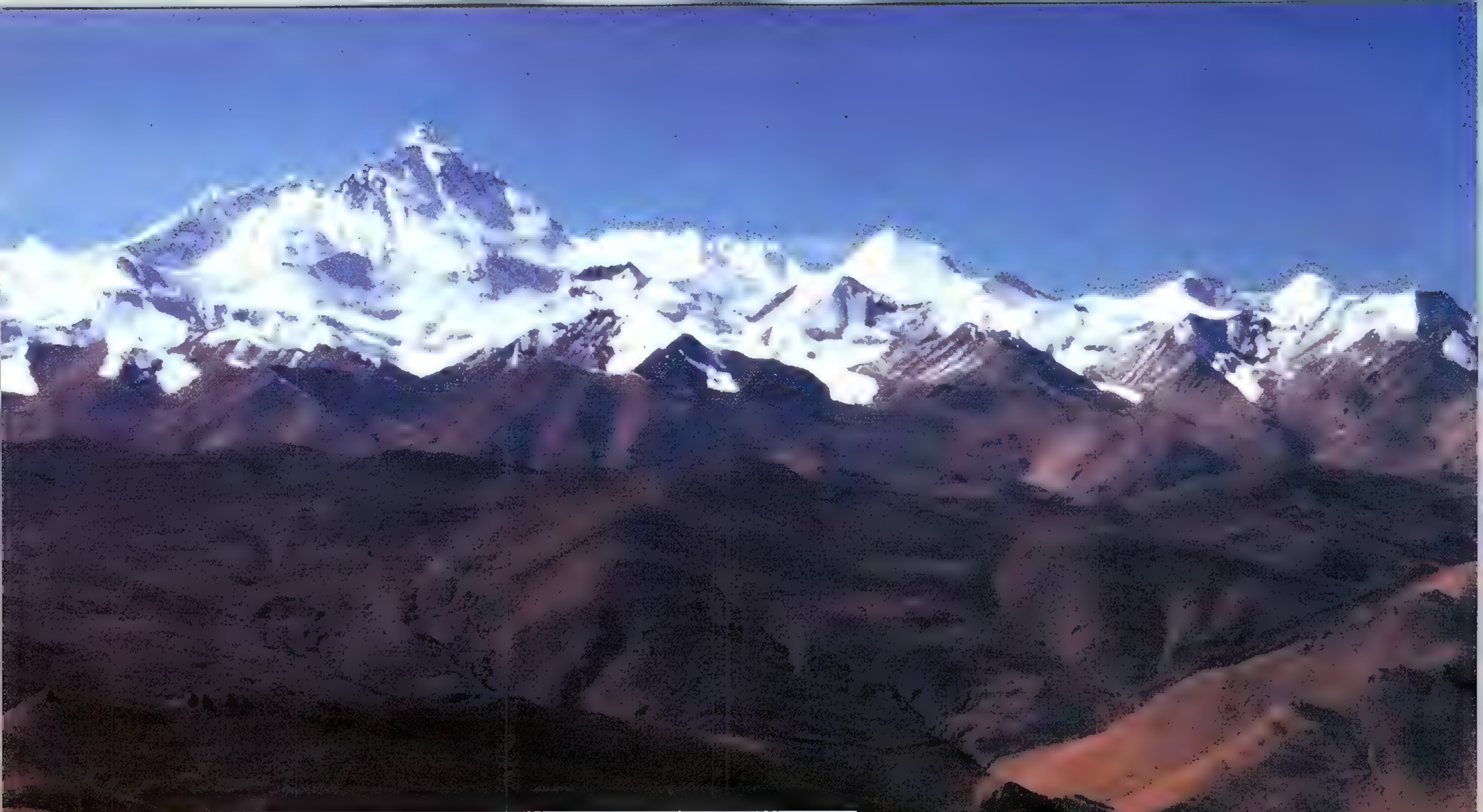
Friendly Jokhang Temple

Nevertheless, the lengthening shadows of the tourists could not compare to the beauty of the pilgrims prostrating themselves in front of the Jokhang Temple gate. The pilgrims moving in unison presented a mysterious and solemn sight, attracting many photo-taking tourists. Unlike the noble atmosphere of the Potala Palace, Jokhang Temple seemed closer to the common people; its open courtyards, its narrow trails for circling pilgrims and even the tops of the monastery buildings were all accessible to tourists. I particularly liked to look out from the high point of the monastery; at the pattern formed by hundreds of butter lamps in the major hall; at the Potala Palace in the setting sun; at old people prostrating themselves on the ground before the temple, and at the road workers who beat time and sang while they worked, all of which formed a unique picture of Tibet.

Tibetan Buddhists hold that Lhasa is the centre of the world while Jokhang Temple is the centre of the universe. Of course, both sayings are hard to prove. Yet, looking at it from a different angle, Jokhang Temple could be considered a "centre" in some sense as, like a huge magnet, it attracts so many outsiders. Jokhang Temple is the Mandra in my heart.

Reference materials: *China Tourism*, Nos. 224 and 225; *Handbook on Travels in Tibet*, published by Hong Kong China Tourism Press, price: HK$95; *Focus on Tibet*, price: HK$95; *Tibet: A Travel Guide on Five Routes*. Both latter two are published by Hong Kong China Tourism Press.

1. **Tibetan Opera is shown on the day of the Shoton Festival. (by Dianna Lau)**
2. **Children find shelter on Barkor Street. (by Dianna Lau)**
3. **Looking down from the roof of Jokhang Temple. (by Li Zhixiong)**
4. **A sincere worshipper in Jokhang Temple. (by Wu Yamin)**



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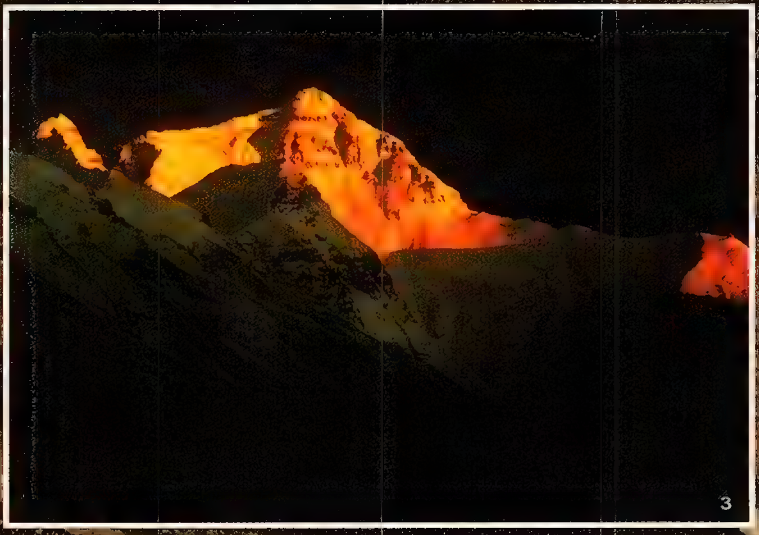

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THE CALL OF QOMOLANGMA

If you have the luck to approach Mount Qomolangma, please seize your opportunity to be with her alone. When you humbly put your ego aside and absorb all messages from her, you will find you are experiencing an unforgettable moment.

Some 10,000 to 20,000 years ago, a young and mighty qomo (goddess) lived on the border between Nepal and China's Tibet, a region of snow and ice (the Himalayas). Beautiful and wise, she was deeply loved and respected by the people. Some even risked their lives in order to kiss her beautiful face. Her name was Langma. She is the youngest and tallest mountain peak in the world, towering 8,848 metres above sea level — Qomolangma.

The First Difficult Step

In the afternoon of August 20, we arrived amidst thick drizzle at Qomolangma Hotel in Tingri. All guests checking into this hotel are either going to the Rongbu Temple or the Mountaineering Base Camp. On this particular day, there were only five groups of visitors. Perhaps due to the bad weather, our driver wore a gloomy face. Wu, our team leader, also seemed to be in a bad mood. We ate supper quietly. Then, we retreated to our rooms to await details from Wu about setting out next morning. I felt impatient. It had not been easy for me to come and our plans had long been set. Should there be any sudden change or delay, the trip would have to be cancelled, and my hopes of seeing Qomolangma would evaporate forever.

Finally at 11:00 that night, Wu knocked and entered my room, saying that he had finally succeeded in securing a van to go with us the next day. In bad weather, it's safer to have two vehicles travel together so that they can help each other in case something happens on the road.

When I woke the next morning, the rain had stopped. We waited excitedly for the van but it failed to show up. The owner of the vehicle had decided not to risk damaging his van or having an accident, since the weather was not stable. In short, the fee for hiring his van (US$100 from each of six passengers) was not worth it to him. He would rather take other visitors to safer scenic spots.

In antiquity, the place where Qomolangma now stands was covered by water. From the Cenozoic Era to the late Tertiary Period, rock formations deep under the sea began to rise under the strong influence of the Himalayas movement, giving rise to a fault-block. And Qomolangma is the most typical of fault-block mountains. Its pyramid-shaped peak is formed of brown marble and crystal gray rock of the Ordovician Period. According to scientific studies, the mountain is still growing at a rate of 3.2 to 12.7 mm a year.

Onono and I had had "high expectations" and found it difficult to accept the sudden change of plans. Wu was put in a very awkward position. He had spent nearly half the previous night convincing the driver to drive along with us and now the driver was saying no, using a series of excuses. Worst of all, he shouted: "If you do not want to live, you go ahead!" This enraged Wu who was caught between his guests and the driver. His plight and helplessness were pitiful to witness.

Unable to See the Peak

It was really difficult for us to drive around in the wilderness, over hazardous roads, contending with rocks, mud and ditches, and not a single road sign. We could not afford any mistake and must travel safely to get to Qomolangma which I had so long dreamt of seeing. All the way, the driver never stopped complaining, while Wu's patience wore thin. Still, poor Wu had to explain the situation again and again to calm him down as well.

At 2:30 p.m., we finally arrived, safe and sound, at the Rongbu Temple on Qomolangma. The peak was veiled in thick clouds. Without a word, the driver hurriedly prostrated himself towards the peak to pray. The rest of us, seeing our dreams realised, were as excited as the driver.

After checking into a small hotel opposite the temple, we drove down to the riverbed where the driver revealed the first trace of a smile since we'd left Tingri. He filled several bottles with the sacred water. We drank big mouthfuls and the icy cold, clear water immediately washed away our fatigue and lifted our spirits.

By the time we returned to the van, the peak was completely hidden in a world of white. Only heaps of Mani stones, which Tibetans build for praying, were visible.

At 7 p.m. we got to the temple, which, at 5,100 metres above sea level, was the

highest in the world, waiting for the sunset. The wind was very strong and our lips were white with cold. Sadly, more than an hour of dutiful waiting brought no magic. When the final ray of sun disappeared, the surrounding area turned pitch dark. With disappointed sighs, we returned to our rooms.

A Moment Shared with Qomolangma

In the guest room I ate the chocolate given to me by a friend, which I had promised to enjoy only at the most critical moment. Unexpectedly it led to a severe toothache. This, coupled with altitude sickness, made me overly excited. The temperature in the room was low. Everything conspired to me awake all night.

Dimly, I heard the wind howling. Peering outside, I saw the peak was still wrapped in thick clouds. I went back to bed.

At 8 a.m., I woke to a bright day. The clouds had been blown away by the wind and the peaks began to reveal their outlines. I exclaimed and rushed out, not giving a thought to being on a high plateau. My heart beating rapidly, I watched Qomolangma gradually present itself. I was alone in enjoying this moment as my fellow tourists had gone to the valley. I had the mesmerising mountain all to myself.

Almost madly I took several roles of film. Then I set aside the heavy camera and went to a Mani stone heap. I sat down against the stones, facing Qomolangma, staring at it, appreciating the miraculous changes of the clouds and the mountain's contours, now hidden, now revealed.

When I was completely calm again, I entered a realm of "nothingness" without realising it. It was a moment of great satisfaction. All the encounters and feelings I'd had in my life welled up — sweetness, bitterness, sadness, happiness, worries and anger.... What was different this time was that they were nothing but moments flowing by, instead of heavy weights on the heart. My emotions were no longer influenced by them. On the contrary, trivial events of daily life kept flashing through my mind — the day-to-day care shown by my parents, the support of my friends and sense of teamwork among my colleagues.... All deserve to be greatly cherished. Without such a clear-headed moment, they might have gone unnoticed or been taken for granted. To forget happiness is not inevitable, because we often neglect the art of being grateful.

***Onono Remarks:** To travel the Yunnan-Tibet route, one needs a strong body, ample energy, good judgment and a reliable vehicle. Unfortunately, our vehicle had all sorts of problems. Soon after we set out, we had to change to another one, but the second one also required repeated repairs, which gave me plenty of time to rest. When we decided to go see Qomolangma, we were cursed to "look for death". At 5,000 metres above sea level, the air pressure dropped and oxygen thinned, making breathing difficult and movements slow. Even an eiderdown coat was not enough against the cold, snowy August weather.*

This is not some mysterious religious doctrine, simply the result of the great impact of nature, which is enough to purify the mind and inject new inner strength. If we stay alert in each moment we are alone with nature, this is possible.

Previous page:

1. Qomolangma, the highest peak in the world, standing among the Himalayas. (by Li Zhixiong)
2. Not everyone has the luck to see Qomolangma who often hides in clouds. (by Dianna Lau)
3. Qomolangma looks even more sacred under the setting sun. (by Li Zhixiong)

This page:

1. The campsite for mountaineers at the foot of Qomolangma. (by Li Zhixiong)
2. Doors of residential houses decorated with patterns of the sun and moon found on the way to Qomolangma. (by Dianna Lau)
3. On the road leading to Qomolangma. (by Dianna Lau)
4. Rongbu Temple offers an advantageous position from which to view Qomolangma. (by Dianna Lau)

THE SKY OVER LAKE NAM CO

I have loved rainbows since childhood, for I once believed a rainbow was a slide used by an angel to bring happiness to humankind. It is hard nowadays to see rainbows in big cities and that may be one reason why not many city dwellers are happy. Several rainbows appear in the sky over Nam Co in a single day and the locals seem to be living in heaven.

Surprising Blue

After paying 35 yuan, we entered the Namco Scenic Area. On the way, we kept running into individual travellers riding bicycles. There were even tourists walking. How I envied them! Several times, I wanted to slip away from the group and join those individuals. I waved to them out the window, sending out spiritual support.

From reading about it, I had developed a longing for Nam Co, which, covering 1,920 square kilometres, is the largest lake in Tibet. Lying peacefully at the foot of the Nyainqêntanglha Mountain, the lake and the mountain seem to be a pair of eternal lovers in each other's embrace. The land rover twisted its way along the road and the yellowish mountains on either side cast a gloomy shadow on me. Suddenly, an endless patch of blue appeared. It was the miraculous Lake Nam Co. Immediately, weariness abated and my heart sped up again.

At noon, we arrived at the lake, checked into the hotel and had lunch at the only restaurant. The tent and food I had brought proved unnecessary, for basic facilities to cater to visitors had been developed here. The only problem was the bathroom. The so-called toilet was simply the grassland behind the hotel without a trace of shelter. And the rule was first come, first served! It was relatively safe after dark, when people simply went about their business, men and women alike, without disturbing one another. There was no other choice.

After lunch, we walked on the lake bank. A strong wind stirred up the water, giving a view different to its normal calm. If the water had not been so cold, I would have liked to swim in it. A friend who had once come here told me he could not help himself and had many mouthfuls of lake water. As a result he visited the toilet repeatedly that night. I kept this in mind and resisted my own temptations. My attention wandered to a flock of sheep that had come near. I chased them and they scattered. When they gathered again, they all stood still looking at me. I was wondering what they wanted when I noticed they were making water in front of me. I apologised and turned away.

Colours of the Rainbow

At the end of the lake, the sky turned from blue to red and the distant mountains were tinged with shimmering gold. In order to fully appreciate this beautiful view, I left no time to visit Zhashi Temple on the Zhashi Peninsula. However, I learnt that in every Year of the Sheep of the Tibetan calendar, thousands of pilgrims come from far away to worship in the

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temple and circle the lake. It is the busiest time for the temple. On my way, I saw people chant while walking around Mani stones. This added a sacredness to the heavenly lake in the dusk.

It was nearly suppertime and I had to go back to the hotel. On the way, I saw a foreign female tourist camped out in the field, surrounded by a flock of sheep. I regretted not having my tent with me. Just as I turned around, I saw two huge rainbows rising over the lake. I was so surprised that my mouth fell wide open. Everyone else had stopped to gaze as well.

That night, the pitch-dark sky sparkled with stars, another intoxicating view. I tried to find the lovers' stars symbolising the cowboy and the heavenly maiden who only meet once a year on the seventh day of the seventh month of the Chinese lunar calendar. After supper, we all got together for a drink. It happened to be my birthday and I was in high spirits. Naturally I had a little more than usual and went to my room tipsy. I slept so soundly that even strong winds and a rainstorm did not wake me.

Dizzying White

In the morning I woke, startled by some noise. I opened the door and to my surprise, the yellowish Nyainqêntanglha Mountain had been entirely covered with snow, a masterpiece in white. I began another spell of picture taking, but before I finished, another pair of rainbows appeared. Wasn't this magic? Even the yellow dog of the hotel rushed to the lakeside to view the scene. Then a flock of sheep came toward me, seeking affection. It was like a dream but it all actually took place by Lake Nam Co.

1. **Living at 4,700 metres above sea level, the people here are deeply tanned. (by Dianna Lau)**
2. **At Lake Nam Co, the water, mountains, land and sky form a harmonious world. (by Dianna Lau)**
3. **At dusk, the twin rainbows brought a pleasant surprise to tourists. (by Wu Yamin)**
4. **Lake Nam Co is the highest salt lake in the world and the second largest of its kind in China. (by Wang Jin)**

ON THE RETURN JOURNEY BAQÊN → DÊQÊN

1

The familiar southern route of the Sichuan-Tibet Highway (the section from Markam to Lhasa) was coming to an end. We turned to the northern route, the section from Baqên to Qamdo that had not yet been completely opened to see what await us.

Which Route Should We Take?

We planned to drive along the northern route of the Sichuan-Tibet Highway to reach Dêgê in Sichuan Province before returning to Yunnan. As we prepared to leave Nam Co, we heard that the road in northern Tibet was closed to traffic as a result of continuing maintenance work following heavy rainfall. Throughout the trip, there seemed to be no reliable way of getting information on road conditions. All we could do was forge ahead and ask as we travelled. We consulted drivers coming from the direction we were headed, asked petrol station attendants and local residents or pedlars selling food at the roadside, but the answers always varied. When we had to make an important decision, the driver always opted for the most conservative opinion, entirely natural from his viewpoint. However, we, who were on a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Tibet, were sorely disappointed when we had to change routes or cancel an excursion.

Before arriving in Nagqu, we had to decide whether to take the northern route between Baqên and Qamdo, which could be blocked at any moment due to landslides after heavy rain, or return to Yunnan along the more accessible, asphalt road.

Fortunately, the owner of the restaurant in which we had supper assured us that the road from Baqên to Qamdo was open to traffic.

Switzerland or Tibet?

Once out of Nagqu, we entered a wild region that had been visited by few tourists. First to greet us were field mice, sticking their heads out from caves, constituting a lively scene rare in other parts of Tibet. I hoped they would not seriously harm the crops. Then we came across endless barley fields whose various shapes seemed to be the work of abstract painters.

As we approached Riwoqê County, scenes of lush green trees, blossoming flowers, gurgling streams and singing birds appeared one after another. The landscape here is as beautiful as the Tianshan Mountains in Xinjiang and the Nine Village Gully in Sichuan, or the Alps in Switzerland! I hadn't expected such stunning scenery in a well-protected natural environment with flourishing trees, unpolluted rivers and pure folk customs.

Entering the county town of Riwoqê, I was struck by a huge horizontal banners with the words "Opening Up Riwoqê" and "Welcome to Riwoqê". Perhaps because of my profession, I was sensitive to the phrase "opening up". I was afraid the price for this would be too high — damage to the environment and local traditions. I could not bear such scenes in other tourist areas of children begging tourists for money and "monks" forcing diners at eateries to make donations, and the random felling of trees... I really hoped that the departments concerned in Riwoqê would make careful preparations before opening their county to tourism. Their goals should be long-termed, not shortsighted.

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'Who Are You?'

We first checked into a hotel set in the midst of a pine forest and then went to look around. Onono and I soon aroused the interest of the local people. Not surprisingly, Onono and Wu, walking ahead, were stopped by the police and asked: "Who are you?" Onono replied: "I am a Japanese!" Hearing that, they politely asked Onono to go with them to their office. I did not want to invite trouble and so I went back to the hotel waiting for their news.

In about 30 minutes they came back. As we had the right document for visiting Tibet, we were allowed to stay. The police, however, said that the area was not yet open to outside tourists and therefore we must always follow our tour guide. We asked the police what the words on the welcoming banner meant, they said the "open" was directed towards domestic visitors only at this time.

> ***Onono Remarks:** In areas yet not open to tourists, foreigners without an official permit may not enter. So we did not encounter many tourists. The streets and restaurants in Qamdo were quite clean but were not very characteristic of Tibet.*
>
> *On a muddy road after a rain, several women were prostrating themselves. It would take them many months to get to Lhasa this way. I asked them why they did it and they lowered their heads without replying. They were really pious Tibetans!*

Where Were We?

Next we went to Qamdo, a major town in eastern Tibet, which one must pass while travelling to Tibet either from Sichuan or Yunnan. Our driver bravely negotiated the final section of a collapsed muddy road and steered us into the town.

In Qamdo, Jambalin Monastery, the largest temple in the area, is not to be missed. Unfortunately, by the time we arrived, it had been closed. This temple of the Yellow Sect of Tibetan Buddhism was built in 1444 and was highly honoured by the Qing emperors. From Emperor Kangxi onward, every living Buddha for the temple was approved by the Qing court. Today, the temple still houses the copper seals and horizontal boards issued to the living Buddha by the emperors. The temple was being renovated, so amidst flying dust we took a look round it from the outside.

Walking by following the Tibetans who were circling the temple offered us more reward. As the temple was situated on a high terrace, we could have a bird's-eye view of the entire town. We also watched as old Tibetan artisans made clay Buddha statues and carefully observed the patterns and colours applied to the Mani stones. We were stopped by a monk who wanted to have a picture taken with us. He then hospitably invited us home for a chat.

On the way back to the hotel, we ran into many new, Chinese-style buildings: star-rated hotels, disco halls, Sichuan-style restaurants and fashion boutiques stocked with clothes from Guangdong. We also saw the shopping street under construction. In small lanes we found silversmith's shops owned by people from Yunnan. Though the streets were clean and well designed, I had an odd feeling of not knowing exactly where I was....

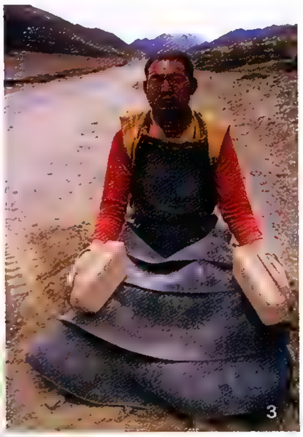
4

One Adventure Ends, Others Continue

After we left Qamdo, we did not have time to go to Sichuan through Batang as previously planned. Instead, we turned south to Bamda and took the Yunnan-Tibet Highway to Dêqên.

On the way, we passed the Bamda Airport, 4,500 metres above sea level. Converted from military to civilian use, this airport is perhaps the highest in the world. On that particular day it was closed, making the place seem desolate. Yaks and Tibetan dogs lay on the airstrips enjoying the sunshine. What a humorous sight it must be for passengers flying over these animals lazing around when they themselves were suffering altitude sickness.

We came across many Tibetans prostrating on the ground in prayer as they made their way to Lhasa. Some of them had been "walking" for several months. In this severe terrain, all they had were simple clothes with special "gloves" and "waistbands" to protect their outstretched hands and stomachs whilst prostrating themselves on the ground. Only their eyes revealed their determination. Passers-by, moved by their piety, often gave them small sums of money for their road expenses. For the Tibetans, it means their good fortune to be able to offer a sort of support to a pilgrim.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After 30 days of adventure, we all breathed a contented sigh when we were finally on the highway heading to Yunnan. The driver and guide in particular were much relieved. As we drove past three happy, young pilgrims, I felt something in common with them — I was on a worthwhile journey in my own life.

Translated by Z. G. Li, F. Huang

1. **All in one: tradition meets modernity. (by Wu Yamin)**
2. **The land in eastern Tibet makes a poetic picture. (by Dianna Lau)**
3. **A determined pilgrim on his way to Tibet. (by Li Zhixiong)**
4. **A curious lama in the Jambalin Monastery. (by Dianna Lau)**

The following page: Religious belief spurs them forward, on the long road to spirituality. (by Dianna Lau)

TRAVEL TIPS

Climate of Tibet:

Thin air, low air pressure, low oxygen content

Altitude (metres)	Air Pressure (millibars)	Air Density (g/m3)	Oxygen Content (g/m3)	Boiling Point (°C)
7,000	420	573	133	77
6,000	481	644	149	80
5,000	549	719	166	84
4,000	624	802	186	87
3,000	707	892	206	90
0	1013.2	1292	260	100

Remarks: Funny things happen at heights over 3,500 metres above sea level. For instance, cream-based products "flow" like liquid and inflatable pillows expand or contract according to the changing air pressure. The higher the pressure, the fuller the pillows became.

Solar radiation and long daylight hours:

Because of the high altitude, thin air, and low dust particle and water vapour content, there is a slight loss of energy when sunlight passes through the ozone layer. Tibet has the highest solar radiation levels in China.

Remarks: Though we stayed in the car most of the time, we still got a fair amount of sunlight. Wear a cap to shield you from the sun and to keep dust out of your hair. For maximum protection, you may even want a gauze mask.

Temperature contrasts:

It's not unusual to experience the weather of all four seasons in a single day. This phenomenon makes for interesting photos, too, from the grasslands to the snow-capped mountains, so remember to take along enough film.

Year-round dry and rainy seasons:

Tibet's dry season usually lasts from October to April, while the rainy season runs from May to September. Rainy season landslides can be destructive.

Average Temperature of Places in Tibet:

Place	Annual average°C	Average°C in Jan.	Average°C in July
Amdo	-3.0	-15.0	7.9
Nagqu	-1.9	13.9	8.9
Qamdo	7.6	-2.5	16.3
Damxung	1.3	-9.9	10.8
Bomi	8.5	-0.2	16.5
Lhasa	7.5	-2.2	15.1
Nyingchi	8.6	-0.2	15.6
Zêtang	8.3	-0.7	15.5
Xigazê	6.3	-3.8	14.2
Gyangzê	4.7	-5.1	12.8
Tingri	0.7	-11.3	10.9
Zayu	11.8	-4.0	18.6

The temperature falls 6°C with every 1,000-metre ascent.

Ways to Enter Tibet:

1. Individuals: Contact travel agencies in Yunnan experienced in receiving foreign tourists. They can design and arrange explorative, sightseeing, cultural interest or field trip tours to suit your time and cost requirements.

Recommended agency: Yunnan Overseas Travel General Co.
Add: 96 Dongfeng Road East, Kunming, Yunnan (inside the Camellia Hotel).
Tel: (871) 312 7120 / 316 8799 Fax: (871) 319 4956 e-mail: yunotcip@public.km.yn.cn

2. Panised Tours: To visit major scenic spots in Tibet conveniently, join a tour organised by a Hong Kong travel agency. A 10-day tour takes you to famous scenic spots in Tibet, such as the Shoton Festival, Nagqu Horse Race Festival and Qomolangma Peak Base Camp. In 2002, there will be tours to Ngari in West Tibet.

Recommended agency: Hong Kong China Tourism Ltd.
Add: 24/F Westlands Centre, 20 Westlands Road, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong.
Tel: (852) 2516 9228 Fax: (852) 2563 7994

DIY Tour: Foreign tourists and residents from Hong Kong, Macao or Taiwan must obtain a visitor's permit to enter Tibet. Permits, flight tickets and itineraries must be applied for through travel agencies. Tourists cannot purchase flight tickets to Tibet themselves. To fly from Hong Kong to Lhasa, contact the Tibet Tourism Office in Hong Kong or the Qomolangma Travel Agency, Tel: (852) 2838 3391.

The following is a detailed itinerary provided by our reader, Mr. Leung (e-mail: beeto333@yahoo.com.hk). He took a DIY tour to Tibet last year.

Stage One: July 26-28: countryside of Lhasa (Gandan Temple, Drigung Monastery and Nam Co)

Stage Two: July 29-Aug 13: Xigazê and Ngari

Stage One:

July 26	Lhasa (morning) → Gandan Temple, Dagzê → Drigung Monastery (stay in the temple)
July 27	Watch celestial burial on the mountain (morning, one hour's walk) Drigung Monastery (noon) → Nam Co (evening, stay in riverside hotel)
July 28	Watch sunrise at riverside Nam Co (noon) → Yabajain → Lhasa (night)

Expenditures:

Transport (from Hong Kong) — Air: 1,500 yuan (Shenzhen-Chengdu) + 2,200 yuan (Chengdu-Lhasa); Car hire: 2,200 yuan / six people.

Food — Dining in Tibet is very economical. A meal costing 20-30 yuan is quite filling. In some eateries far from the city, such as parts of Ngari, the range of food is limited and prices are twice as high or higher.

Accommodation — Equally affordable. Most hostels charge 20-30 yuan for a night. Hostels at the foot of Qomolangma or other holy mountains cost 60-100 yuan as visitors are fewer. To save money and be in closer touch with the Tibetans, you may ask to stay in a residence, which may cost only 15 to 30 yuan. However, as travellers must stay in regular hosting places to comply with Tibet's travel regulations, discuss this with your driver in advance.

Stage Two:

July 29	Lhasa (noon) → (Langkazê) Yamzho Yumco (evening, stay in Gyangzê)
July 30	Tour around Gyangzê (morning) → Ten-thousand Buddha Pagoda, Pelcho Monastery Ruins of Mount Zongshan (noon) → Xigazê (evening, stay in Xigazê)
July 31	Tour around Xigazê and Tashilhunpo Temple (morning) (noon) → Lhaze → (afternoon, stay in Xiegêr)
Aug 1	Xiegêr (Old Tingri) → Rongbuk Temple (noon) → visit Qomolangma Base Camp (stay in Qomolangma Hotel)
Aug 2	Tour around Qomolangma → Rongbuk Temple → Xiegêr → Lhazê → Angren (evening, stay in Kaga) → (en route to Saga)
Aug 3	Kaga → Sangsang → 22 Highway Station (Laga) → (en route to Saga)
Aug 4	22 Highway Station (Laga) → Saga (noon) → Payang (stay in Payang)
Aug 5	Payang → Sacred Lake (stay in Payang)
Aug 6	Tour around the Sacred Lake (morning) → Holy Mountain (noon) (stay in Gangdisi Hotel)
Aug 7	Tour around Holy Mountain (morning) → Zhada (arrive in evening, stay Zhada)
Aug 8	Tour around Zhadaguan Earth Forest and ruins of Guge Kingdom (stay in Zhada)
Aug 9	Zanda → Shiquanhe (afternoon, stay in Shiquanhe)
Aug 10	Shiquanhe → Gê'gyai → Qiatuka → Gêrzê (stay in Gêrzê)
Aug 11	Gêrzê → Dongco → Coqên (stay in Zhaxi)
Aug 12	Coqên → Kangmar → 22 Highway Station (Laga)(stay at 22 Military Station)
Aug 13	22 Highway Station → Lhazê → Xigazê → Lhasa (night)

Expenditures:

Transport — Car hire for whole trip (17,000 yuan / 6 people, including fuel and repair costs). Notify the driver in advance that he is responsible for his own food and accommodation.

POSTSCRIPT

Rough roads, a sturdy but basic car and changeable weather combined to form the most arduous tour I have ever made. Although faced with landslides, falling rocks, flooding and road repairs, we were also blessed with hot springs, precious herbs and qingke wine. Besides, we were able to appreciate such customs as the celestial burial on Mount Drigung, the Shoton Festival in Drepung Monastery, dancing in the Sera Monastery, devoted pilgrims in the Jokhang Temple, Tibetans bowing their heads every few steps in worship, as well as Qomolangma at sunset.

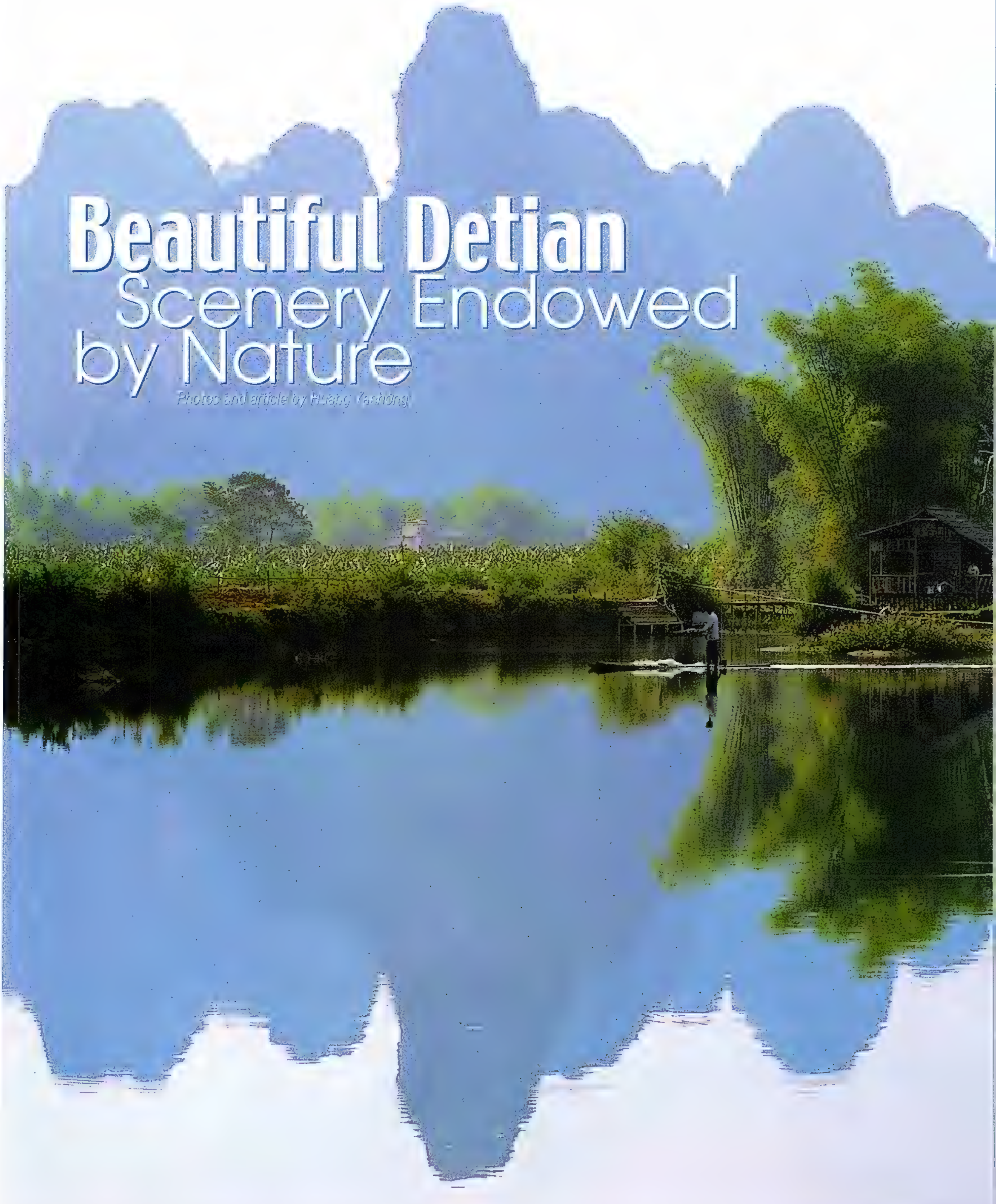
I am grateful for the help of my companions, which made the tour the most unforgettable one of my life!

~Onono

On my second day back in Hong Kong from Tibet, I hastened to a dentist in Causeway Bay. Afterwards, I walked through the bustling shopping area, passed the crowd outside the Sogo Department Store and crossed the road which was cloaked in polluted air. My heartbeat suddenly quickened, my blood pressure rose, and I became anxious, dizzy and felt the lack of oxygen. Was this delayed altitude-sickness or a latent "city-phobia" emerging?

Perhaps the nerves that had long been numbed in my body had been re-awakened by the purifying Qomolangma, the celestial burial and double rainbows. Now, that I have clear basic desires and goals for my life, it's time to wave my "feather" to strive for my own way.

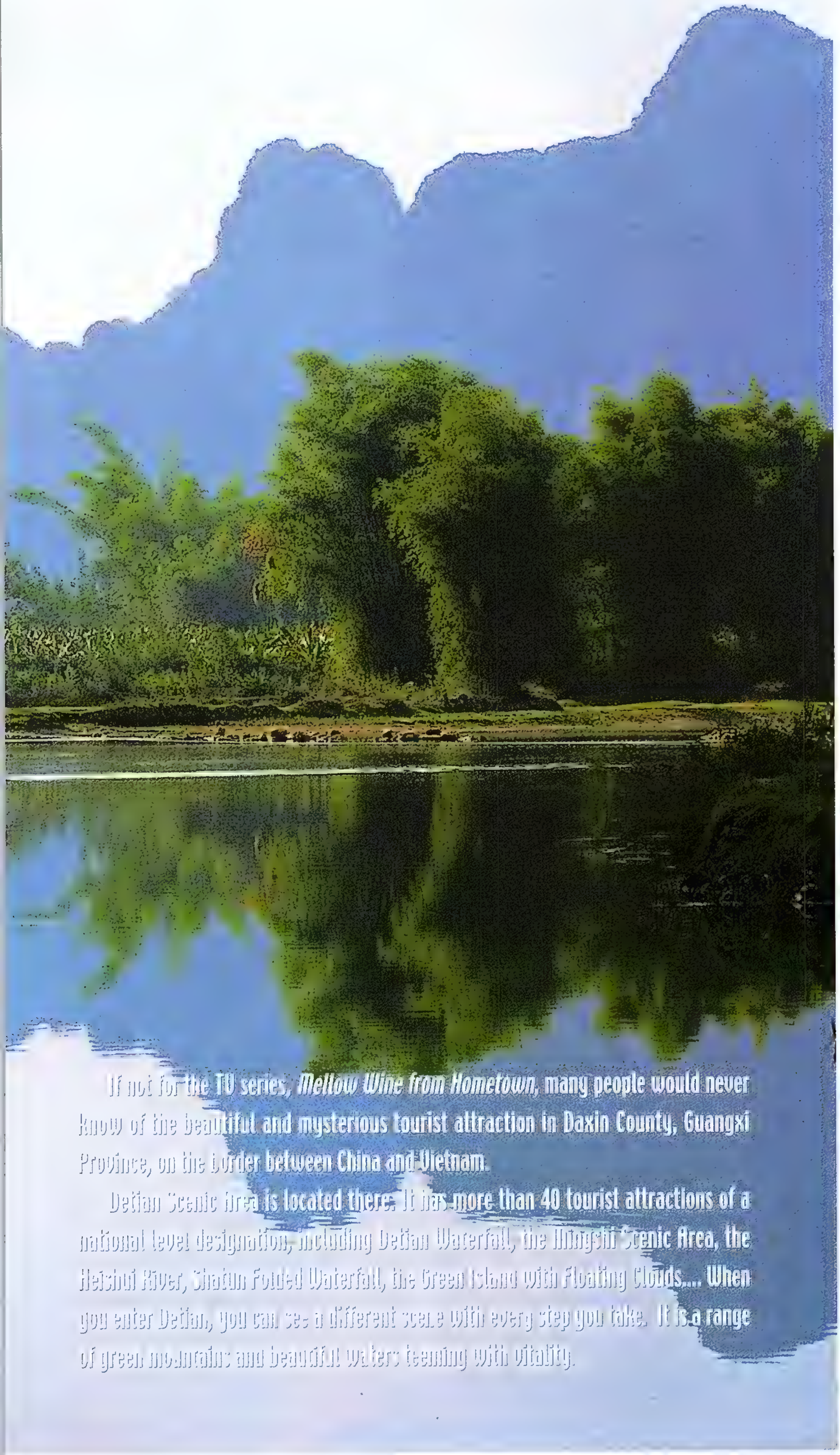
-Dianna Lau



Beautiful Detian

Scenery Endowed by Nature

Photos and article by Huang Yanhong



If not for the TV series, ***Mellow Wine from Hometown***, many people would never know of the beautiful and mysterious tourist attraction in Daxin County, Guangxi Province, on the border between China and Vietnam.

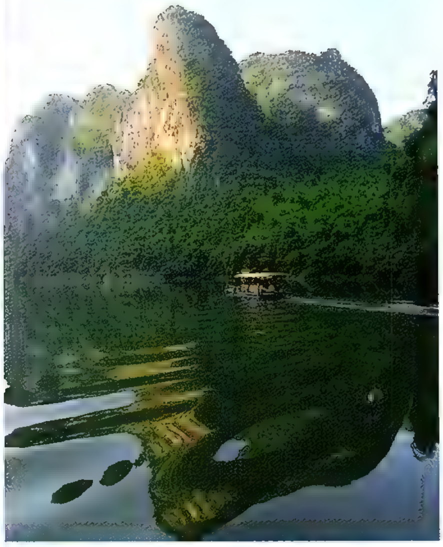
Detian Scenic Area is located there. It has more than 40 tourist attractions of a national level designation, including Detian Waterfall, the Mingshi Scenic Area, the Heishui River, Shatun Folded Waterfall, the Green Island with Floating Clouds.... When you enter Detian, you can see a different scene with every step you take. It is a range of green mountains and beautiful waters teeming with vitality.

Reflections on the Black Water River

Starting from Nanning, capital city of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, we took a bus to Detian. Because the road was being rebuilt, our way was blocked here and there. A local friend told us that the new highway would open to traffic at the end of 2001, improving the travel time from Nanning to Detian to three to four hours.

After lunch in Daxin county town, because of the time lost on the road, we cancelled a visit to the mysterious Evergreen Spring on the nearby Guanyin Mountain, whose water is said to help one keep youthful forever. Now, we seemed to have lost an opportunity to obtain longevity.

It was past 3 p.m. by the time we reached the Heishui (Black Water) River. From a height we gazed down to find the water was blue and limpid. Just



1

2

as we began to wonder why the river was given such a name, Mr. Bi, a man in the group, said that the river looks dark in winter, hence the name.

We boarded a pleasure-boat at the pier to head for the deep valley. As the boat moved forward, we saw sheer cliffs towering on both banks where the mountains were overgrown with dense foliage, and huge, grotesquely-shaped rocks appeared here and there. After entering the valley, we saw a mountain that seemed to be gazing at us like a ferocious monster.

As we cruised deeper and deeper into the valley, the mountains rose higher and higher and the river water became increasingly clearer. It was late autumn and the river flowed sluggishly, looking almost static. Before our boat, the mountains and cliffs were perfectly reflected as if in a mirror, while behind us an abstract painting emerged in our rippling wake. An old saying claims that if the water is too clear, there will be no fish. So I asked Bi if there were fishes in the river. "Yes, there is one very precious species, called bone fish. Once when the river flooded, a big bone fish leapt onto the bank. It measured two metres long and weighed 40 kg."

The photographers on board all stood on the bow and pressed the shutters of their cameras ceaselessly. Unfortunately, the tall utility poles on the river's banks interrupted the scenery and very often, the electric wires wriggled over the river. It is a simple and inexpensive way for the local people to get their electricity supply, but the wires and poles spoil beautiful natural pictures. Here is the dilemma: The local people need electricity and want to get it in an economical way. Should their rights be denied in the excuse of maintaining the beauty of landscape?

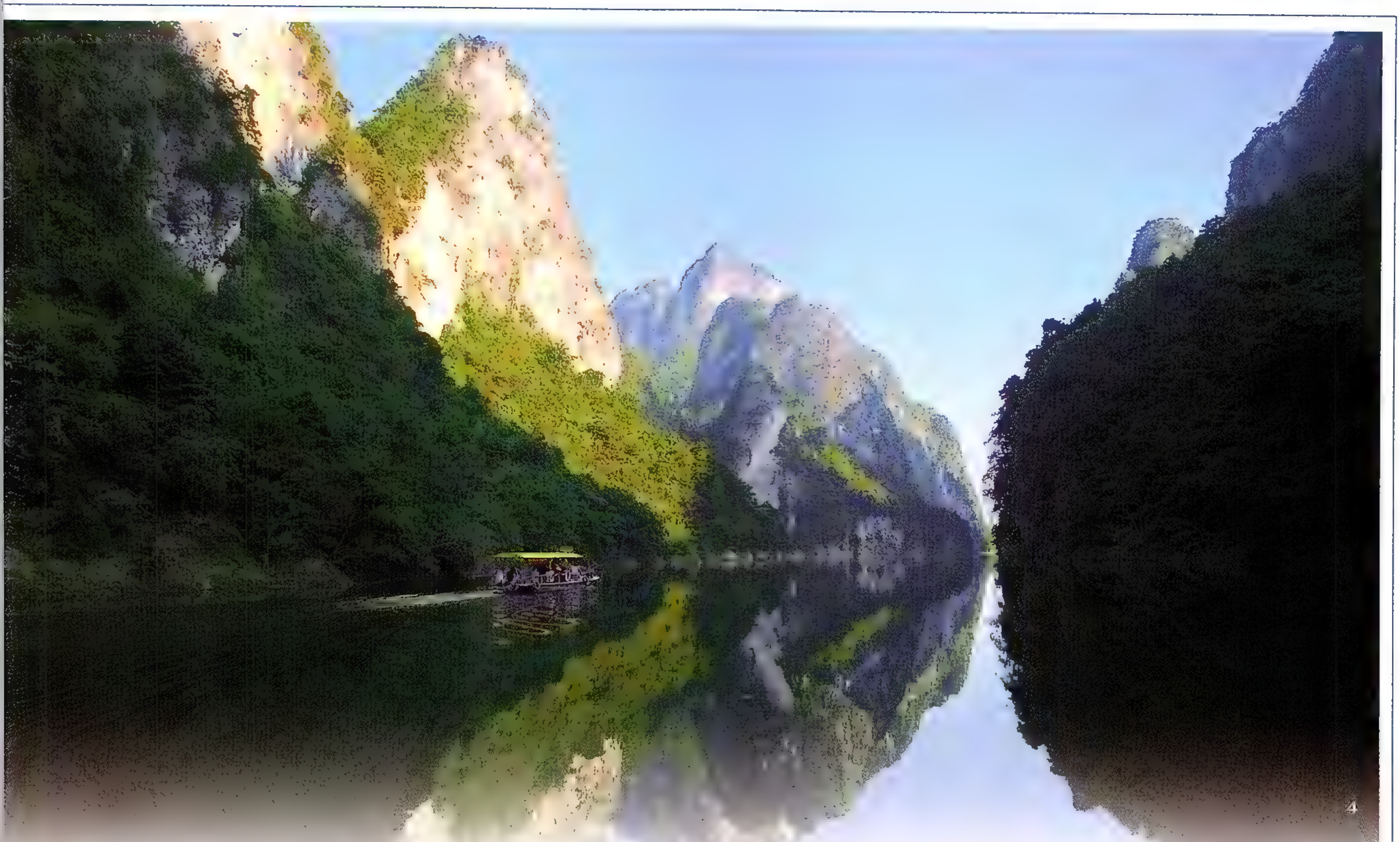
3

Watching the Waterfall through the Guest Room Window

Our bus bumped along all day until we reached the Detian Waterfall at dusk. To our pleasant surprise, our lodging had been arranged in the Detian Villa. This was no ordinary accommodation; it was entirely inside the scenic area and we could enjoy the Detian Waterfall just by opening our window. We learned that our new friend, Mr. Bi, is the owner of the hotel. He himself is an enthusiastic photography fan from Guangdong. Several years ago he came here to take photos and became fascinated by the enchanting scenery. After returning several times, he was urged on by his infatuation and made an investment to build the hotel. Now not only he but all his guests can wake up to see the beautiful scenery every day and take photos from the doorstep of the hotel. He has so far invested more than 20 million yuan and was granted management rights for 50 years. In addition to providing accommodations, he has also developed other tourist programmes.

Standing on the Vista Terrace built outside the hotel and leaning on the railings, we felt our tiredness wash away in the beautiful scenery: the bright, big round moon glowed overhead; the waterfalls, now appearing, now disappearing, hung like white silk hada on the high mountain cliffs, sending forth murmuring, distant voices. Unable to resist temptation, a few friends and I decided to explore Detian at night after supper. Someone suggested we take torches with us, but all the others laughed, saying it was not necessary because the moon was exceptionally bright. We walked along the border highway in the direction of Vietnam. As total strangers unsure where the actual border line was, we hoped we would not enter the other country by mistake and be detained by security guards on the other side.

Beside the road there was a tower for taking a rest. One of our companions said that the tower is a place in the TV series *Mellow Wine from Hometown* the main characters frequent. Although I had not watched the series myself, I greatly admired the director's choice of such a location because it was the



best angle from which to watch the waterfall.

We descended to the side of the waterfall to see the white water splashing in all directions. But strangely, the waterfall was not loud, unlike other waterfalls which tumble down thunderously. As a matter of fact, this was one of the outstanding aspects of the Detian Waterfall. The precipice, in the shape of a staircase with many steps, meant that the water did not fall in one massive drop. By the time it reaches the deep pool, the sound level is only 80 decibels. The wide open terrain also helps reduce the noise. So, it is not an exaggeration to call this China's most gentle, big waterfall.

Lying in bed that night, we didn't sleep well because we kept thinking about going to watch the sunrise the next morning.

Dropping 100 Cubic Metres of Water per Second

The next morning, when the sun emerged reluctantly in the grayish sky, it was already 9 a.m. Still, viewed from a distance, the features of the Detian Waterfall were seen clearly. Behind the waterfall lay the undulating mountains, from where the Guichun River ran out and fell numerous times along its way. In this manner the river branched off into several dozen streams, with some dashing down in a parabola and others squeezing their way out sluggishly from among the rocks and forests. Beneath the waterfall was a deep pool where many bamboo rafts were moored for tourists to hire.

It is actually a group of waterfalls including Detian and Banyue, one big and one small, facing each other. With Banyue on the Vietnam side and Detian in China, the waterfalls' total width is over 200 metres, making them the second largest, trans-border waterfalls in the world. As it was late autumn, the Detian Waterfall's momentum had decreased considerably. During the abundant water season from June to October, the flow of the waterfall reaches 100 cubic metres per second, three times that at our visit.

Walking up from the Detian Waterfall, we reached boundary tablet No. 53 at the border between China and Vietnam. Here the Guichun River was very tranquil and small hills stood erect on the river banks. We neared the boundary tablet and found several groups of visitors already there. They lined up in front of the tablet to await their turn to have a photo taken. Local villagers had come early to set up stalls selling Vietnamese goods such as perfume and rubber slippers.

Previous page:
Main: Mingshi Scenic Area is a newly developed attraction in the Detian Scenic Area.
Upper: Cruising on the tranquil Heishui River.
Lower: The Detian Waterfall with many branches of falls.

1. **Visitors waiting to have a photo taken at border marker No. 53.**
2. **Having a close look at the waterfall by a bamboo raft.**
3. **The Detian Waterfall appears magnificent in summer. (by Chan Yat Nin)**
4. **Beautiful reflections on the mirror-like Heishui River.**
5. **Villagers waiting for tourists to hire their horses.**

Among the items, Vietnamese coins were the most popular. A whole set of brand new Vietnamese paper money cost 115 yuan.

For a period when Sino-Vietnamese relations were tense, Detian was the front line where the situation was explosive, and the local people lived in constant fear, to say nothing of having visitors. Now that the situation has changed, the place has become a tourist magnet. Many visitors stepped around to the other side of the boundary tablet. A local villager told us that many Vietnamese people come to the Chinese side to sell their agricultural products and locally-made cosmetics at low prices and buy articles for everyday use to take back. Some Vietnamese even came to work as casual workers during the season when sugarcane is harvested, earning 15 yuan a day.

The Beautiful Mingshi Scenic Area

On the way back, we went past the small town of Shuolong, where the rural fair was in full swing. We unanimously asked the driver to stop the bus and let us out to have a look. The driver gave us 20 minutes. Shuolong is the busiest market at the border area, which has a market fair on days including the numbers 2, 5 or 8, meaning there are three market days in every 10 days. It was a lesser fair when we were there, but there were still crowds of people moving about. Commodities sold and bought were mainly materials for use in agricultural production such as seeds and pesticides, as well as cheap daily necessities. People selling domestic animals and fowl all used bamboo containers to load and transport their stock. We saw one man put five piglets into one bamboo basket and then fix the basket to the back of his motorcycle before he drove away like a wisp of wind.

Soon after we left the small town, we reached a place surrounded by mountains and rivers. Every one of us in the bus could not help exclaiming loudly: "What a beautiful place! Can we stop to have a look?" Bi laughed, "You all have a good eye. This is the Mingshi Scenic Area, our next destination." The scenic area was one of the places where outdoor scenes for the TV drama were shot. The bus stopped by a bridge, from where we boarded bamboo rafts and floated along the Mingshi River towards the deep mountains. High green mountains rose straight up on either side of the river; simple farm houses stood among the emerald green bamboo groves; and flocks of ducks flapped their wings and swam past us. It was idyllic. "This is a beautiful place. Has any eminent person ever come to visit it?" I asked. Mr. Bi said: "No one really famous, but a painter came here several decades ago. He was so fascinated by the scenery that, due to carelessness, he fell into the river and was drowned. Recently when the local people recalled this accident, they felt very sorry that the painter died because of the beauty of their hometown. They plan to set up a monument to him."

The bamboo raft stopped at a ferry pier and we went ashore. This was where the scene "Crossing the River" from the TV drama took place. There was a log cabin and a huge man-made tree. Those familiar with the TV series recounted: so-and-so earns a living by ferrying people across the river in a boat with a rope, and so-and-so bids farewell to his friends outside the log cabin.... We went inside the cabin to have a look. By then, one of my fellow travellers had boarded the ferry and pulled on the rope, intending to experience how a boatman worked. But he pulled too hard and was almost dragged out of the boat into the river.

Walking along the Mingshi River for awhile, we saw a few farmers' houses. After passing a bamboo grove, we reached the highway, where our bus was waiting. We hastily cast a last glance back at the Mingshi Scenic Area.

Eating Our Fill in Nanning

Upon returning to Nanning that evening, we

immediately went to dine in the Great Miao King Restaurant, famous for tasty dishes such as stewed baby chicken, pork cooked with lemon grass, duck with pineapple, Miao-style soup.... During the meal, there was a musical performance and other programmes for diner participation. The most interesting was "Carrying the New Bride". A man was chosen from the customers to carry a "bride" on his back and show her around the dining hall. Then the "newlyweds" had a mutual toast by drinking from the cups held in the hands of their hooked arms. Then they drank another toast, this time, from the same cups, with their arms around one another's neck. Finally the two of them exchanged presents before the man declared he would take his bride home three days later. Of course it was just a game for fun. The dinner went on until everybody had eaten their fill.

After dinner, still in high spirits, we took a walk on the pedestrian street. It was a well-developed, nice street lined with neat buildings. It looked quite modern when brilliantly lit at night. I had never expected a city in the Southwest to be so prosperous.

Walking past Minzu Boulevard, possibly the broadest street in Nanning, we saw many groups of people dancing at the roadside. Famed as a "dancing street", we were told that the number of dancers enjoying themselves here in one evening could be as many as 5,000. Standing to one side watching them, I envied the Nanning people for their peaceful, happy and healthy life.

It was late by the time we reached the "snack street", but the busy time was just about to begin then. As soon as the clock passed 11:00 p.m., food stalls of various kinds were set up along the street. The different aromas wafting in the air were irresistible. Not only were the dishes delicious but also very cheap. We did not lose the opportunity to sample various snacks. We ate and strolled along, until we could not eat anymore.

Translated by Xiong Zhenru

1. **The picturesque Mingshi River with bamboo groves growing by the waterside.**
2. **The modern pedestrian street in Nanning.**
3. **A tourist carrying his "bride" at a Miao-style dinner.**
4. **Minzu Boulevard of Nanning at night.**
5. **Cross-River Pier, where the TV series *Mellow Wine from Hometown* was shot.**

Tips for the Traveller

Transport:

Nanning is linked by air and rail with major Chinese cities. Flights from Hong Kong to Nanning leave every Tuesday, Friday and Sunday. The 1-1/2-hour flight takes off at 12:50 p.m. and arrives at 14:20 p.m.

Scheduled buses leave Nanning General Bus Station for Detian daily at 8:30 and begin the return journey at 15:00. From the Beida Passenger Transport Centre in Nanning, a scheduled bus leaves for Daxin every 20 minutes.

A scheduled bus departs every 30 minutes from Daxin to Shuolong Town. The trip takes about one hour.

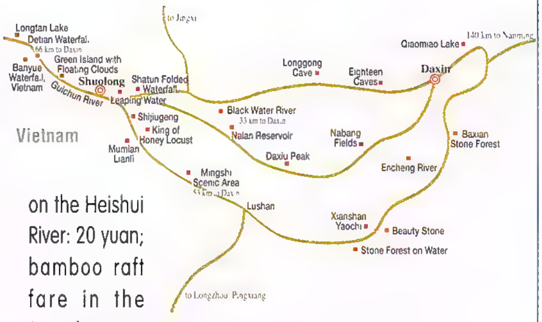
In Daxin county town visitors can hire a vehicle. A minibus costs about 200 yuan/day.

Accommodation:

Daxin Detian Hotel: 360 yuan; Daxin Shuolong Villa: 260 yuan; Shuolong Hotel: 230 yuan; Nanning International Hotel: 550 yuan; Nanning Xiangyun Hotel: 300 yuan; Nanning Taoyuan Hotel: 200 yuan.

Sightseeing:

Admission ticket for Detian Waterfall: 30 yuan; boat fare on the Heishui River: 20 yuan; bamboo raft fare in the Mingshi Scenic Area: 20 yuan.


to Jingxi
Longtan Lake
Detian Waterfall
66 km to Daxin
Green Island with Floating Clouds
Banyue Waterfall, Vietnam
Shuolong
Shatun Folded Waterfall
Guichun River
Leaping Water
Shijiugeng
King of Honey Locust
Mumian Lianli
Vietnam
Black Water River
33 km to Daxin
Nalan Reservoir
Longgong Cave
Eighteen Caves
Daxin
Qiaomiao Lake
140 km to Nanning
Nabang Fields
Daxiu Peak
Baxian Stone Forest
Encheng River
Mingshi Scenic Area
53 km to Daxin
Lushan
Xianshan Yaochi
Beauty Stone
Stone Forest on Water
to Longzhou Pingxiang

An organised four-day tour from Hong Kong costs 2,988 yuan, a little more than the return ticket (2,720 yuan). If you are an independent tourist, you can fly to Nanning, change to a regular bus for Daxin, and then hire a car to visit scenic spots such as the Heishui River, Detian Waterfall, the Mingshi Scenic Area, Qiaomiaoping Lake, etc. Please note that some of the scenic spots, such as Shatun Folded Waterfall and Green Island with Floating Clouds, are seasonal due to the changing volume of water.

Detian Travel Service (Nanning): (771) 3627088

New Guangzhou Travel Service (Hong Kong): 25881099

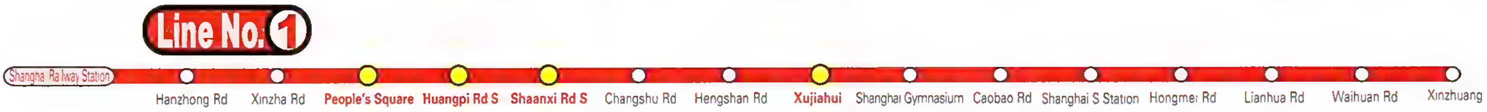
人民广场
PEOPLE'S SQUARE

Tour Shanghai by MTR

Photos & article by Pan Suofei

Do you want to visit Shanghai for just a couple of days but worry that sitting in heavy traffic might waste the better part of your time? There is an alternative — take the MTR.

Currently there are two MTR lines and one light railway in Shanghai. Line 1 starts from the Shanghai Railway Station in Zhabei in the north of the city and ends at Xinzhuang in Minhang in the southwest, running for 21 km with 16 stops. Line 2 starts from Zhongshan Park in Puxi and ends at Zhangjiang High-Tech Industrial Park in Pudong with a distance of 16 km and 13 stops. The lines cross at the People's Square where passengers may change from one line to the other.


Line No. 1
Shanghai Railway Station
Hanzhong Rd
Xinzha Rd
People's Square
Huangpi Rd S
Shaanxi Rd S
Changshu Rd
Hengshan Rd
Xujiahui
Shanghai Gymnasium
Caobao Rd
Shanghai S Station
Hongmei Rd
Lianhua Rd
Waihuan Rd
Xinzhuang

First Stop: the People's Square

Located in the centre of Shanghai, the square is home to the Shanghai Municipal Government Building, Shanghai Museum, Shanghai Grand Theatre, and Shanghai City Planning Exhibition Hall. There is a large stretch of lawn measuring 320 square metres in the middle of the square, while thousand of pigeons gather on its west side.

Recommendations

Shanghai City Planning Exhibition Hall On the east side of the People's Square, it is one of the new key tourist attractions. Focusing on the city's economy, culture and society, its theme presents the harmonious elements — "City, Mankind, Environment and Development".

Inside the hall, the most eye-catching exhibit is a huge model of current city structures, over 600 square metres in size, which is the largest of its kind in the world. It also shows visitors a blueprint of Shanghai for the year 2020.

✉ 100 Renmin Boulevard 🕘9:00 - 16:00
☎ (21) 6372 2077 💰 20 yuan

Shanghai Museum The Shanghai Museum, founded in 1952, is well known for its collection of ancient artwork. The museum moved to its present location in 1996. This new building is in the shape of a huge dome atop a square platform.

The museum houses some 120,000 cultural relics. Highlights of the collection are the bronzes, pottery, porcelain and paintings. The collections of tortoise shells and copper mirrors are fairly complete and well organised.

✉ 201 Renmin Boulevard 🕘9:00-17:00 ☎8188 5785 💰 20 yuan

Second Stop: Huangpi Nanlu Station

In the eyes of local residents, Huaihai Road sets the trends for city life. Hundreds of shop windows displaying the most fashionable articles line the street.

Recommendations

Xintiandi Plaza Xintiandi, literally "new sky and earth", is located on the southern side of Huangpi Road South. The architecture here blends old and new, East and West, embodying the past, present and future of Shanghai.

Xintiandi has a floor space of 60,000 square metres. The houses, known as Shikumen, retain their original walls and rooftops, but the interior of each building has been thoroughly renovated and furnished for city dwellers of the 21st century. It houses an international art gallery, fashion boutique, restaurants, cafe, bar....

✉ Xintiandi Plaza, Lane 181, Taicang Street

La Maison of French Cuisine La Maison in Xintiandi is an influential catering business. Chef Eric Parez, one of the top 10 bakers in the world, was once invited to make a cake for former US president Bill Clinton's 50th birthday. The restaurant's wine cellar contains over 100,000 bottles of nearly 500 well-known brands.

✉ Unit 1, No. 23 Beili, Xintiandi Plaza ☎(21) 3307 1010 💰Set meal 150 yuan/person

Third Stop: Shaanxi Nanlu Station

People liken this street to the "face" of an arttractive, fashionable young woman. Just watching the energetic and beautifully dressed young women is an enjoyable pastime.

Recommendations

Spring in Paris and Parkson Shopping Centre As you emerge from the Shaanxi Nanlu MTR station, you see the department store Spring in Paris, one of the most expensive stores in Shanghai. As its prices are so high, most people here are only window-shopping. However, the Parkson Shopping Centre across the street is very popular. Both prices and brands are mid-range, appealing to many customers. Here, discounts are real and the quality, supply and variety of goods is evident.

Women's Street When you exit this stop, just follow the stream and you'll reach the Women's Street, featuring the latest lady's wear and refined, decorative objects. According to incomplete statistics, the volume of visitors is as high as 50,000 per day. It can reach 100,000 on weekends.

✉ Junction of Huaihai Road Central and Xiangyang Road 🕘 10:00-18:00

1. The People's Square Station of Shanghai's subway.
2. The Shanghai City Planning Exhibition Hall, where the future look of Shanghai is displayed.
3. Shanghai Museum houses a collection of 120,000 cultural relics.
4. The pub and cafe in Xintiandi attract young people.
5. The high-grade department store, Spring of Paris.
6. La Maison, a restaurant serving French food.
7. A corner of Parkson Shopping Centre, where commodities are often on sale.

Fourth Stop: Xujiahui

Several department stores are located in this area. Ganghui Plaza, Huijin and the East Tower sell high-priced items while the No. 6 Department Store caters to medium range incomes. The Huilian Store features inexpensive goods and big discounts at weekends.

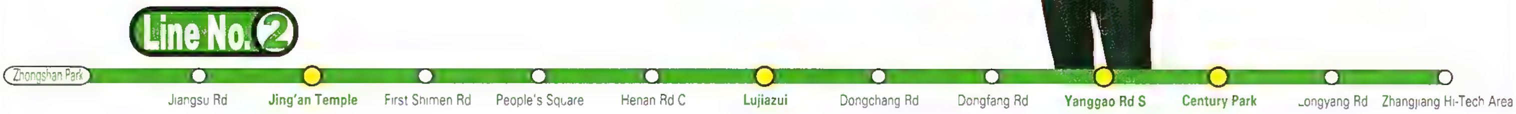
Recommendations

Xujiahui Cathedral Xujiahui is not only a business centre but also a place of culture. The renowned Xujiahui Cathedral (formerly the Ignatius Cathedral) is a typical Gothic structure. It sits facing east, as its two towering spires, over 50 metres high, loom poised and majestic over the large compound.

✉ 158 Puxi Road

Bullfighter Steak & Seafood Restaurant This restaurant, run by a man from Taipei, serves European-style food. The beef imported from America is tender and juicy. A wide variety of cuisine is available. Its business set lunch and afternoon tea are affordably priced and attract many office workers in the area.

✉ Meiluo City, F/2, 1111 Zhaojiabin Road
◷ 11:00-22:00 ☎ 6426 8393
💰 49 yuan for a set meal with a six-ounce beefsteak; 29 yuan for a business lunch



First Stop: Jing'an Temple

Jing'an is a famous Buddhist temple with 1,700 years of history. Of its several structures, the main ones are the Chiwu Gate, the Hall of the Heavenly King, the Hall of the Three Saints, the Hall of Virtuous Works and the Abbot's Chamber, where there is a newly added Mandra of the True Word Sect. Cultural relics in the temple include a large bell from the reign of Emperor Hongwu of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), and Buddhist rock carvings from the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-589). Also housed in this temple are works of art by revered figures.

The vegetarian meals served here have been lauded for years.

✉ 1686 Nanjing Road West
◷ 7:00-16:45
☎ (21) 6256 6366;
💰 A vegetarian banquet for 10 costs 400-600 yuan

Second Stop: Lujiazui

Pudong is the pride of Shanghai; it's 10-year development has turned over a new leaf for the city.

Lujiazui of Pudong, across the Huangpu River from the Bund, is a must-see place for visitors. The Oriental Pearl TV Tower, Jinmao Tower, Waitan Kaleidoscope Tunnel, Binjiang Boulevard, and the Central Green Land of Lujiazui are crowded with tourists.

Recommendations

The Oriental Pearl TV Tower The Oriental Pearl TV Tower, 468 metres tall, ranks first in Asia and second in the world for the height of a television tower.

The revolving restaurant, which is listed in the Shanghai Great Guinness Book of World Records as the highest revolving restaurant in

Asia, is worth visiting. Located inside a sphere 271 metres in mid-air, it makes one full revolution every two hours. Many heads of state, leaders of international organisations and other celebrities have dined here. The buffet provides cuisine from various countries.

✉ 1 Century Boulevard
🕒 8:00-21:30 ☎ (21) 5879 1888
💰 50-100 yuan; Buffet: 150-180 yuan (including admission fee)

The Central Green Land This 100,000-square-metre green land has a lawn of 65,000 square metres. It is the largest stretch of public green space in the city. Standing at the entrance to the Central Green Land is a sculpture, *Spring*. The footpaths in the Green Land form the pattern of a white magnolia, the city flower.

In the centre, a lake covers 8,600 square metres. Interestingly, it takes the shape of the map of Pudong. The white Vista Pavilion by the lake resembles a sail, sparking the imagination. Many newlyweds like to have their pictures taken here. To its south stands the Lujiazui Exhibition Hall which displays structural models of different architectural styles as well as exhibits showing the past, present and future of Lujiazui.

✉ Yincheng Road East, Pudong

Third Stop: Yanggao Nanlu Station

The street outside the entrance of this MTR stop leads to Century Boulevard, the Shanghai Science and Technology Museum and Century Park.

Recommendations

Century Boulevard The "Avenue des Champs Elysee of the East", Century Boulevard is five kilometres long and 100 metres wide, starting from the Oriental Pearl TV Tower in the west and ending at the Administration and Cultural Centre of the Pudong New Area in the east.

Shanghai Science and Technology Museum Situated at the east end of Century Boulevard, this structure resembles a huge sail being gradually hoisted from west to east. It was built with an investment of 1.5 billion yuan from the Shanghai Municipal Government. With a floor space of 98,000 square metres, it is one of the largest of its kind in the world.

Its main theme is "Nature, Mankind, and Science & Technology". Halls currently open to the public include Exploration of the Earth's Crust, Kaleidoscope of Life, Children's Science and Technology Village, etc. Also open are the Universe Theatre, a three-dimensional, giant screen cinema, a 4-D cinema within a small sphere and a collection of almost 10,000 exhibits, samples and specimens.

✉ 2000 Century Boulevard, Pudong 🕒 9:00-17:30 (closed on Monday)
☎ (21) 6854 2000 💰 30 yuan

Century Park This park, at the end of Century Boulevard, is the largest park in the busy urban district of Shanghai. It is divided into areas of country garden, scenery-viewing, lake, lawn, bird protection, international gardens and a small golf course.

Points of interest include the Open Concert Theatre, Rendezvous Square, the Children's Playground, the Fishing Pond, the Geyser, the Musical Waterless Fountain, the Four Seasons Garden, a large bas-relief, A Stream in Woods, the Cobble Beach, Gingko Boulevard, and Yuanchi Pond, the result of a joint endeavour between garden designers from Japan, France, Germany, Britain and the United States. This city oasis leaves one feeling calm and relaxed.

✉ Gate 1, 1001 Jinxiu Road, Pudong New Area 🕒 7:00-18:00
☎ Tel: (21) 5833 5621 💰 10 yuan

Translated by M. J. Wang

1. **The Xujiahui Cathedral, a Gothic structure.**
2. **Inside the Bullfighter Steak & Seafood Restaurant.**
3. **There is a good vegetarian restaurant in Jing'an Temple.**
4. **The Oriental Pearl TV Tower, landmark of modern Shanghai.**
5. **The Central Green Land at Lujiazui is a nice place for relaxation.**
6. **The broad and tidy Century Boulevard.**
7. **The Floral Clock in Century Park, Pudong.**

PHOTOGRAPHING BIRDS ON LAKE QINGHAI

Photos & article by Ge Yuxiu

Birds are mankind's friends. They are not only beautiful, but also have feelings. I have travelled to Lake Qinghai several times to photograph birds on Bird Island and Three-Rock Island. The days and nights I spent with the birds on Three-Rock Island, in particular, left me with unforgettable memories.

With special permission, some photographer friends and I visited Three-Rock Island in May 1995.

Three-Rock Island, or Sankuaishi, in the southwestern part of Lake Qinghai, is over 1,200 metres long east to west and more than 800 metres wide north to south. Tens of thousands of bar-headed geese, great black-headed gulls, brown-headed gulls and great cormorants gather here from March to July every year to build nests, lay and hatch eggs and feed their young.

A Stormy Night

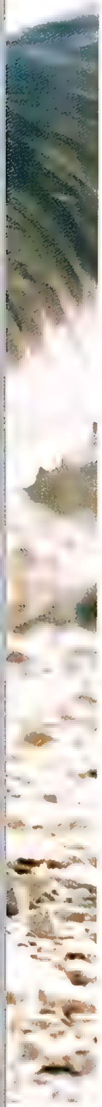
On Three-Rock Island, each group of water birds has their own territories. If an errant bird intrudes upon another species' territory, it is attacked instantly, so we naturally received an exceptional "welcome". Several thousand great black-headed gulls circled overhead, dived down at us and "bombarded" us with their droppings. We erected our tent in a depression some distance from the nests. Then at midnight, a north wind flung torrents of rain against our fragile tourist tent, drenching our bedding and clothes. Due to the particular geographical environment around Lake Qinghai, there is a vast difference in day and night temperatures. When we first set foot on the island, we perspired even in our shirtsleeves; in the storm, we shivered inside our overcoats.

Daybreak came at last. Washed clean by the overnight storm, Lake Qinghai was as smooth as a mirror. The snow on the mountain peaks on the southern side of the lake was clearly visible. We aimed our cameras at the beautiful flocks of birds, the slowly-rising red sun and the glistening, snowy mountains.

Lovable Goslings

To avoid alarming the birds, we were very careful in moving about to take photographs. To get good shots, we often sat immobile in one spot for two or three hours. We also crawled on all fours to get close to a group of birds. One day, I found a goose nest with nine eggs in it. A gosling had already poked its way out of one shell. I watched and waited patiently and succeeded in photographing all nine goslings hatching and learning to walk and swim.

The bar-headed geese are birds of feeling and faithfulness. When a mate dies, the partner remains single and never mates



again. After being hatched, the goslings stay close to their parents to avoid being attacked by other birds. Every year some young birds die after being pecked at by adults of other species. On one occasion, we found seven goslings that had been chased and pecked at by great black-headed gulls in the gulls' territory. We immediately hurried to their rescue. We fed and took care of them. They seemed to understand us; whenever they saw us, they chirped continually and followed us wherever we went. Six days later, when the boat came to take us away, we took the lovable goslings to a group of geese about 150 metres away. In no time, they came back to us, nuzzled against our feet and became even more endearing. We took them to the group of geese again, but again they returned to us. After taking them back a third time, we quickly boarded the boat. Two goslings soon reached the water's edge and chirped on a huge rock while flapping their wings. They jumped to another rock, slid down into the water and began to swim towards us. As the boat picked up speed, the goslings became smaller and smaller in the distance, but they were still swimming after the boat. Only when some gulls began to pester them did they finally swim back. Through the binoculars, we could see two of the

Great Cormorant

The great cormorant has shining black feathers and an extra large bill. When opened, the bill is two to three times wider than its head. The bird is a diving champion and a savvy fish catcher. Fishermen often use them to catch fish by tying an iron ring around their necks to prevent them from swallowing the larger fish. Cormorants feed on sturgeon and are usually quiet. Only after catching a fish or when someone approaches their nests, will they coo. Their behaviour is generally very gentlemanly.

Cormorants mainly keep to themselves. However, they will sometimes steal or openly plunder grass and twigs from the nests of other birds for their own nests, which gives rise to fights.

Females and males take turns hatching their eggs during the day, while at night they sit on the nest together, completely covering the eggs.

Newly-hatched young stay with and are fed by the parents. When a parent feeds the young, it opens its bill wide so that the birds can pick the food from out of the crop. When the chicks are able to fly, the parents take them to the lake to look for food.

Great Black-Headed Gull

This is a large species of gull with a pink bill and black tail and wings. As its cries sound like the mating calls of cats, it is also called a "water cat".

Great black-headed gulls are bellicose by nature. When building nests, they often fight and endlessly peck at each other over a favourable spot, but when attacked by a mutual enemy, they all fight back together. They soar and dive in the sky by the thousands with deafening, frighteningly angry cries and bombard the opponent with their droppings until the adversary flees in utter defeat. Sometimes, the gulls peck at the goslings of other gulls in nests close to theirs. This also leads to fighting until both parties are exhausted.

Young gulls can feed on the half-digested food of the parent birds as soon as they hatch. About 10 days after hatching, the young can follow their parents to look for food in shallow waters.

The wind on Lake Qinghai can be very strong, churning up the sand and dry grass on the island. At this time, the parent gulls in the nests sit with their heads towards the direction of the wind and hide the young birds under their breasts or behind them. As they brave the wind, they fully demonstrate their parental love.

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goslings on the rock looking towards us in the distance. Even now, I still see the adorable, downy goslings and hear their joyous chirping and wonder how they fared.

Revisiting Three-Rock Island

I went to Three-Rock Island again in June 2000.

During this trip, we succeeded in taking a great number of good photographs of the gentlemanly great cormorants, bar-headed geese flying in pairs, brown-headed gulls courting and mating and a rare rainbow on Bird Island. I saw the bar-headed geese cushioning their nests with down feathers plucked from their breasts; the great black-headed gulls protecting their young against a fierce storm and the great cormorants feeding their chicks with partially digested food brought up from a parent's crop as the young birds stretched up their necks and opened their mouths wide. The bare rocks and beaches — burning hot during the day and freezing cold at night — had become beautiful, mysterious and enchanting places full of life, which made people linger.

During my time on Bird Island and Three-Rock Island in Lake Qinghai, I became attached to the birds and my soul seemed to become cleansed. My love of and care for the birds deepened. With camera in hand, I hope to continue to photograph birds, to show their beauty and grace so that more people will understand, love, and protect birds and their ecological environment, the home of both man and birds.

1. **A rare rainbow over Bird Island as seen from Three-Rock Island.**
2. **Great black-headed gulls are bellicose by nature, but when a strong wind blows on the lake, the parents protect their young under their breasts and turn their heads to face the wind.**
3. **Newly-hatched great cormorants stay in the nest for many days and are fed by their parents.**
4. **Goslings emerge from their shells after 28 days of incubation. They can follow their parents around once their feathers are dry.**
5. **Even the unsociable great cormorants have time for courtship.**
6. **At mating time, the male brown-headed gull tries to win over the female by feeding her. When she accepts him, they start to court and coo.**
7. **The countless birds of Bird Island create lovely shadows as they fly against the sunset.**
8. **The author: "I hope to continue to photograph birds, to show their beauty and grace so that more people will understand, love, and protect birds and their ecological environment."**
9. **Mother goose leads the way and father goose brings up the rear as they take their goslings out to forage for food.**

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TIPS FOR THE TRAVELLER

Lake Qinghai is more than 100 km northwest of Xining, capital city of Qinghai Province. Covering 4,500 square kilometres in area, it is the largest saltwater lake in China. Bird Island at the northwestern corner of Lake Qinghai is 300 km from Xining. From March to September every year, hundreds of thousands of bar-headed geese, great black-headed gulls, brown-headed gulls, great cormorants, and ducks gather here to reproduce and moult. White swans come in winter.

Bird Island is composed of the isles of Haixishan and Haixipi. Haixishan, or Small Western Hill or Egg Island, is shaped like a camel's humps. The isle was originally only 0.11 km in area. As the lake's water level has lowered in recent years, the highest point of the isle is now 7.6 metres above the water level. The isle is home to the largest number of species of birds. As the isle is covered with countless nests with eggs in them at nesting time, it is also called Egg Island. Haixipi is shaped like a ramp, higher in the east and lower in the west, rising over 30 metres above the water and covering 0.46 square kilometres. The top of the isle is relatively flat and overgrown with leguminous plants and wild onions. The eastern side is a sheer cliff dropping down to the water and at the northeastern edge is a dip fault. From a distance, it looks like a castle in the lake and is the kingdom of great cormorants. When the cormorants crowd together, the isle is totally black.

Bird Island's terrain is flat and the climate is mild. Bordered by water on three sides amid quiet surroundings, with plentiful waterweeds and fish in the lake, it is ideal for sustaining bird life. Each species of water bird chooses a different terrain and ecological environment as home.

Most species on Bird Island are migratory. Every spring, when the warm current blows in from the Indian Ocean, the birds that have migrated to South Asia and the southern part of China take a long flight northward across the Himalayas and the Yangtse and Yellow rivers to return home like long-absent wanderers. Without stopping to rest, they arrive at Bird Island at the end of a day-and-night-long flight, and immediately begin collecting twigs and grass to build their new nests. At this time, Bird Island is a joyous, bustling, noisy world. In the sky, on the island, over the water, hard-working birds are everywhere.

Best Seasons for Photography

From March to July, the bar-headed geese, great black-headed gulls, brown-headed gulls, great cormorants and other water birds reproduce and feed their young. Courting and mating make for good photos, as do the bar-headed geese taking their goslings out on foraging trips.

Between the end of October and the end of February, one can photograph thousands of great swans and tens of thousands of ruddy shelducks on the edge of the lake near Bird Island.

Transport

Xining can be reached by both train and plane. Regular trains run from Beijing, Shanghai, Qingdao and Zhengzhou to Xining.

The tourist bus to Bird Island in Lake Qinghai leaves Xining Railway Station at 6:30 a.m. The regular bus from Xining to Bird Island leaves at 7:45 a.m. from the Long-distance Bus Station, 250 metres south of the Railway Station.

Fares: Regular bus: 25 yuan; tourist bus: 35 yuan.

Ticket to the Bird Island Nature Reserve: 45 yuan.

Accommodation

The Bird Island Hotel and other hotels receive overseas guests at Lake Qinghai: 20-80 yuan/bed; cheaper hotels: 15-40 yuan/bed.

Equipment

A 135 camera is good for photographing birds. As one cannot get too close to them, a telephoto lens of at least 300 mm is needed. Also, bring a UV or skylight filter and plenty of sun-block. Film and batteries available at the Bird Island Hotel.

Since temperatures differ greatly from day to night, warm clothes are necessary. Bird Island is 3,100 metres above sea level. Photographers with heart disease, pulmonary emphysema or high blood pressure should take extra precautions.

Lake Qinghai Nature Reserve and Bird Island Hotel (970) 659184.

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Bar-Headed Goose

This species of wild geese derives its name from two black stripes on its head. Weighing from 2.5 to 3.5 kg, it has an orange-red bill with a black edge, orange-red feet and grayish-brown wings. A first-class flier, it can soar higher than 8,000 metres into the sky where, with less air resistance, it can cover 300-500 km a day. Bar-headed geese generally mate in fresh water. The male bird stands guard at the side of the female bird and will stretch out his neck, ready to fight if they are bothered by an outsider.

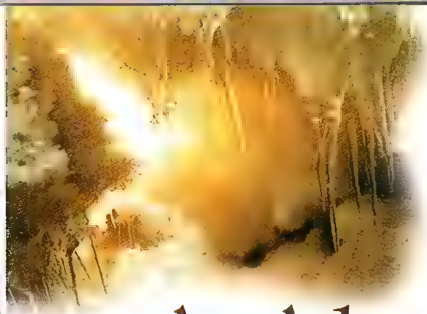
The young gosling breaks out of its shell after 28 days of incubation and will subsist on only the yoke remaining on its body for three days. The parent geese watch the goslings strictly and do not allow them to wander about because if they enter unfamiliar nests, they may be pecked to death by other geese.

Brown-Headed Gull

This smaller gull has beautiful rings around the eyes of its brown head, a red bill and red feet. Although the brown-headed gull is beautiful, it is lazy. It often moves among the nests of other birds, stealing fish caught by cormorants to feed their young and pecking and eating the eggs of bar-headed geese. So it is also called the "thief gull".

Brown-headed gulls are the most recent residents of Bird Island. They always come and go in loving pairs and build their nests together with soft grass and twigs. A round, dish-like nest is built in a day or two.

At hatching time, the parents take turns minding the nest and searching for food. The one in the nest never leaves the eggs before the other returns. The male often flies as far as five kilometres away to find food for the female. But the female never goes very far and only looks for food in the area near the nest and her partner.



An Adventurous Mission to Take Pictures at Hukou

Photos & article by Chang Qingmin

The Hukou Waterfall is in the border area between Yichuan County of Shaanxi and Jixian County of Shanxi. It is at Hukou that the more than 400-metre-wide Yellow River suddenly surges into a 50-metre-wide passage, driving the rolling water to fall 30 metres into the rocky riverbed, like water pouring out of a teapot. Hence, the name — Hukou, which literally means "mouth of a teapot". It is the largest cataract of yellow water in the world.

During Chinese New Year of 2001, two friends and I went to see the famous waterfall. We set off from Lanzhou, passed Guyuan, Xifeng and Luochuan, and arrived at the county town of Jixian. We stayed in the county government hostel and each paid 20 yuan for a bed. After rushing through a simple supper, we discussed our itinerary. Just then a news story came on the TV, reporting that the waterfall at Hukou had become a huge ice sculpture, parts of which rose as high as five metres. Icicles of all sizes had formed and hung from the rocky banks of the Yellow River. Even more amazingly, by the edges of the river, a few reclining "ice lions" seemed to be holding up their heads and watching the waterfall. We leapt up in excitement. Despite our fatigue from the journey, we carefully checked our cameras and lenses, and various kinds of film. We were ready to go.

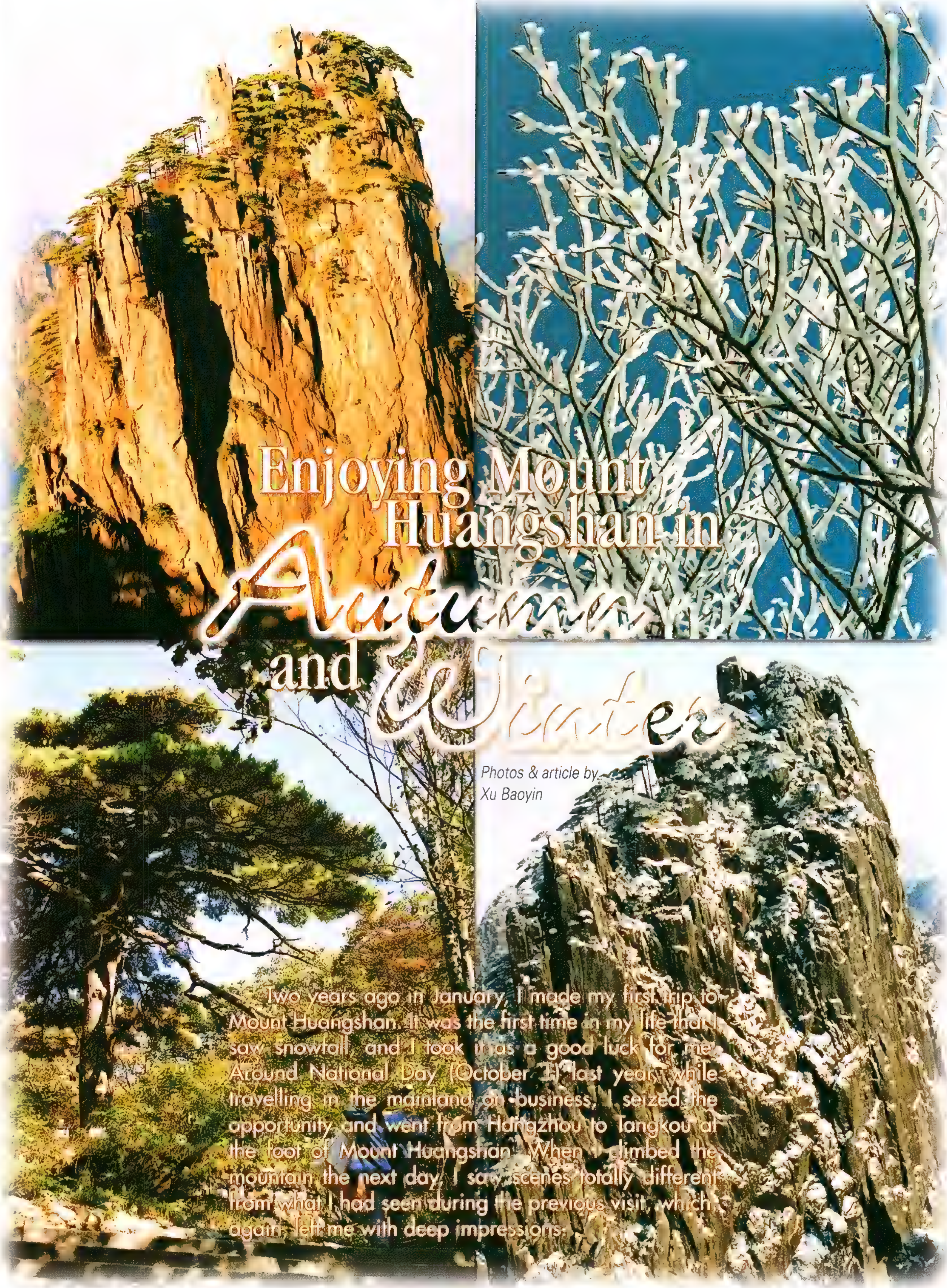
Before daybreak the following morning, we hired a car and raced to the Hukou Waterfall. As soon as we saw it, we were flabbergasted. One by one, we scaled an icy mound and began to sing: "The wind is howling, the horses are neighing. The Yellow River is roaring, the Yellow River is roaring...." The vigorous tune accompanied by the rumbling water of the river was carried far, far away. A world of ice, the whole place was a crystal palace, transparent and delicate. Some formations resembled frozen rivers, others appeared to be transparent caves or towering obelisks. The entire river was like a silvery dragon gleaming in the early morning sun....

To take a picture of the waterfall head on, one had to perch on a sheet of ice extending well over the river. It was very dangerous, but I set my mind to the task, mustered all my courage and gingerly made my way onto the ice. There, facing the water rushing in my direction, I held up my lovely Nikon FM2 and pressed down the release with my forefinger. The motor efficiently rolled three times every second. In one stretch, a reel of slides came to an end. The joy, to me, was immense. As I turned round and headed for the bank, I heard a big thud. A huge chunk of ice weighing several tons fell to the river. If I had been one step closer or had left one second later, I would have....

The temperature at the river was extremely low, -25°C I guessed. I dared not put my camera bag on an ice block, for fear it might slip into the bottomless river or freeze to the ice. So I had to carry it on my back. While searching for the best position to take a picture, my friend Mr. Zheng got the better part of one of his legs caught in a crevice in the ice. When I rushed over and pulled his leg out, I noticed he wore a pair of ordinary leather shoes. This made me so angry that I wanted to kick him. At the same time, I was pleased with myself, for I had put on a pair of heavy boots with soles like caterpillar tank tracks. My other friend, Mr. Li, climbed up a "cliff" and took photos with one of his legs half-kneeling on an ice block. It was very narrow and slick. He could have slipped into the river at any moment. I didn't call out to him, believing that would only scare him. Luckily, he soon finished and came back. Only then did I feel at ease.

This was the most adventurous trip, as well as the riskiest mission, I had ever had in my life. It left an indelible impression on me. I was very glad, however, for I took many good pictures.

Translated by M. J. Wang



Enjoying Mount Huangshan in Autumn and Winter

Photos & article by
Xu Baoyin

Two years ago in January, I made my first trip to Mount Huangshan. It was the first time in my life that I saw snowfall, and I took it as a good luck for me. Around National Day (October 1) last year, while travelling in the mainland on business, I seized the opportunity and went from Hangzhou to Tangkou at the foot of Mount Huangshan. When I climbed the mountain the next day, I saw scenes totally different from what I had seen during the previous visit, which again left me with deep impressions.

Mount Huangshan in Winter

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It was so foggy my first day on the mountain that I could hardly see the peaks though they were quite close. I decided to have a quick look at Mount Huangshan, then leave for the next destination instead. So I abandoned my plan to hike up the mountain, took a cable car from Ciguang Tower to Yuping Tower (10 minutes), and came down by cable car again, from Bai'e Ridge to Yungu Temple.

Seeing Snowfall for the First Time

From the cable car, I saw a world of white fog. It was drizzling, too. Only the rocks and trees near the cableway were visible. Since the weather was no better on the mountaintop, the slopes were steep, my bag heavy and time short, I skipped many famous scenic spots. I could not hide my disappointment, for I had so longed to see this mountain. While hastening from one cableway station to another, I took very few pictures.

When I reached the West Sea, the rain still fell. However, it was not normal rain. Stretching out my gloved hands, I watched the drops land on my palms. Ah, they were not raindrops but snowflakes! I finally saw snow for the first time in my life. In fact, the snow had been falling for awhile. As the roads were wet, the snow melted immediately upon touching the ground, so I had not noticed it. Eventually, the roadside rocks and tree roots were trimmed in white. The snow on me, of course, was melted by the warmth of my body.

Going Up the Mountain Again

I rose soon after 6 a.m. the next day. Through the window, I saw the ground covered in snow. The locals told me that if it was snowing here, it must be snowing more heavily on the mountaintop. I decided to go up the mountain a second time.

Soon after the cable car left Yungusi Station, I was captivated by the scenery. To the left was a range of steep peaks. Completely blanketed in snow, their outlines were clearly displayed. The rocks and trees at the foot of the mountain were all capped in white. What a charming landscape!

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Clothes

After a snowfall, temperatures on Mount Huangshan drop, and usually it is only 2°C at 9 a.m. My blazer, a woollen jumper, GoreTex coat and a pair of woollen gloves kept me warm. Wearing the same warm clothes the day before, I felt hot and sweat soaked my T-shirt. Shoe covers, in all sizes, are good for walking on snow-covered ground and are available in the mountain shops. Each cover comprises two iron plates, fixed to the toe and heel, respectively.

Itinerary

Day 1: From Huangshan Airport, I took a bus to the Mount Huangshan Scenic Area and lodged at Jiulong (Nine-Dragon) Villa by the Nine-Dragon Waterfall, over 10 km from Tangkou Town at the foot of Mount Huangshan.

Day 2: I rented a car to visit the Tangyue Archways, Xin'an Stele Garden, Taibai Tower and the villages of Hongcun and Xidi. Returned to Nine-Dragon Villa for the night.

Day 3: After taking a taxi to the cableway station at Ciguang Tower, I walked quickly to visit the Yuping (Jade Screen) Tower, West Sea Scenic Area, and North Sea Scenic Area before taking a cable car to the Bai'eling (White Goose Ridge) station to go downhill to Yungu (Cloud Valley) Temple. Returned to Nine-Dragon Villa by taxi.

Day 4: Hired a car to the cableway station at Yungu Temple and took the cable car up the mountain to visit the main scenic spots in the North Sea Scenic Area. I went down by the same cableway and returned to the Wolong Hotel by car.

Expenses

Transport

From Huangshan Airport to Nine-Dragon Villa: 120 yuan; car hire for one day: 500 yuan; car hire from hotel to cableway and back: 100 yuan.

(Confirm your taxi the night before because not all drivers will drive up the mountain on a snow-covered road.)

Accommodation

Jiulong (Nine-Dragon) Villa, close to the Nine-Dragon Waterfall; clean, heated, with hot water supplied. Rate: 260 yuan/ standard room; Tel: (559) 556 1370.

(My taxi driver from the airport recommended the hotel. Some taxi drivers get commission for taking guests to certain hotels; it was a nice place to stay anyway).

Wolong (Sleeping Dragon) Hotel, in the same area as above. Rate: 180 yuan/ standard room. Rooms not as good as Nine-Dragon Villa, but acceptable for the price.

I was determined to take lots of pictures of the peaks and could not wait to arrive at the upper station. Unexpectedly, I nearly fell when I stepped onto the ground, which was covered in shining ice. It was impossible to walk in ordinary shoes, so I returned to the station and put on my shoe covers. They worked well. I would not need to worry about falling.

Snow had piled up on the big trees outside the cableway station. With white crowns and brown trunks, they looked like the shredded coconut on pedlars' carts in Hong Kong, distinctively backed by the blue sky. It was 9 a.m. The morning mist had dispersed and the rime on the branches reflected the sunlight, shining beautifully.

At Shisun (Stone Shoot) Peak, I saw a mountain shaped like half an olive. While snow had accumulated on the trees and stones, there was very little on the steep cliff sides, only white dots here and there. The sun spread its light generously on the mountain, illuminating a wonderful picture.

As If in Dreamland

The wind was strong and the temperature low. I pulled up my hood and put on my gloves. Though inexpensive, the gloves played an important role in keeping me warm. When I changed film with my bare fingers, they felt frozen in seconds. When I gripped the ice-wrapped handrails along the trail, my glove often stuck to them.

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There were few visitors. Occasionally, I met a couple of photography fans or porters, but most of the time I was alone, walking the snow-covered road or roaming among the pine trees. The chilly wind blew snow down off the trees, creating an atmosphere I had only dreamt of previously. When I walked before the pure, icy peaks, I felt enormously enriched, as if I owned the whole mountain.

Whomever I met on the mountain, tourists, porters or administrative clerks, I greeted them voluntarily. Most of them replied, smiling, "How do you do?" These simple words shortened the distance between us, making me feel at home.

From Danxia (Red Cloud) Peak, I looked towards Shichuang (Stone Bed) Peak in the distance. Three or four peaks stood there at different heights, some closer, some further away. White mists rose now and then among them, framing the peaks and exposing their edges more distinctly. It looked very much like a traditional Chinese landscape painting. To get a good photo, I used all the lenses I had brought. Reluctant to leave, I ate my simple lunch — ham and eggs boiled with tea and salt, left over from the day before.

In just a few hours, I had used up five or six rolls of film, and I felt satisfied. My only regret was that during the two days, every time I went up or down the mountain I had taken the cable car. It would have been more fun to go on foot — after all, I was still young and strong.

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Previous page
Upper left and lower right: A peak on Mount Huangshan.
Lower left: A porter passing the Black Tiger Pine in the North Sea Scenic Area.
Upper right: Rime on tree branches on Mount Huangshan.
This page

1. **The Black Tiger Pine withstanding the cold.**
2. **Ice on the surface of a pond for water reservation.**
3. **The winter scenery of Stone Shoot Peak attracts photography fans.**
4. **A silvery wonderland.**
5. **Trees outside Bai'eling Cableway Station.**
6. **Eighteen Arhats Facing the South Sea in the North Sea Scenic Area.**

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The Colours of Autumn

I made up my mind to walk up the mountain during my second visit. I had a backpack, a bag and a tripod. The trail was not too steep and seemed okay for me. I travelled with five third-year college students from Hunan whom I got to know during the trip. They had decided to tour the scenic area before the public holidays to avoid the crowds. National Day and other long holidays, which are usually extended to a week by switching work days for weekends, are good for tourism, and visitors fill up almost all scenic spots.

An Episode on the Way

It usually takes three to four hours to reach Yuping Tower. We took a bit longer because of something that happened on the way. Tiandu (Heavenly Capital) Peak was closed at the time for a three-year renovation. But one of the students thought it was a pity to miss this major scenic spot, so he crossed the barrier and strode on up the peak. A guard found him and alerted the public security office. A policeman came to investigate. Standing in the cold wind at the foot of the peak, we kept an eye on the trail, hoping the young man would return soon. When we saw him with the policeman, we worried that he would be fined a hefty sum. However, he was not asked to pay money but to write 1,000 words describing his folly and to promise not to make the same mistake again. The student later told us that when he reached the top, he walked along the narrow Fish Spine, which stands

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Clothes

It was warm in the Mount Huangshan area last autumn. I was sweaty while climbing the mountain, though I wore a T-shirt. At the top, especially when standing at a mountain pass where the wind was strong, I had to put on a coat. Also, before sunrise, the temperature was only 9°C, and my T-shirt and GoreTex were barely enough.

Itinerary

Day 1: I took a bus from Hangzhou and arrived at Tangkou Town in the afternoon. Stayed in town overnight.

Day 2: Took a bus to the Hot Spring Scenic Area and changed to another bus to Ciguang Tower. I then joined five college students from Hunan to walk up the mountain. After four hours, we reached the Baiyun (White Cloud) Scenic Area and I stayed there for the night.

Day 3: After watching the sunrise at Guangming (Bright) Summit, I toured the scenic areas of White Cloud, West Sea and North Sea leisurely. Stayed in North Sea overnight.

Day 4: Watched the sunrise near Qingliang (Cool) Terrace and toured more of the North Sea Scenic Area. Then, from the Bai'eling cableway station, I walked an hour and 45 minutes downhill to Cloud Valley Temple. Retuning to Tangkou Town by bus, I then hitched a ride on a pick-up truck to Huangshan Airport to catch my flight to Hong Kong.

(On my way to the airport, the first truck driver tried to dump me onto another truck and they asked me to pay them at that point. I firmly refused, saying I would pay when I got to the airport. They gave up.)

Expenses

Transport

Bus from Hangzhou to Zhounan Hotel in Tangkou: 75 yuan; pick-up truck provided by hotel to the Hot Spring Scenic Area: 10 yuan; truck to Ciguang Tower: 5 yuan; bus returning to Tangkou: 20 yuan; pick-up truck to airport: 25 yuan.

Accommodation

Zhounan Hotel, Tangkou: Clean rooms and comfortable beds; rate: 200 yuan/standard room on September 29, but rose to 300-400 yuan at start of National Day (October 1) holiday week.

Baiyun Hotel, Baiyun Scenic Area: 80 yuan/bed for four- or six-bed room with bath.

Beihai Hotel, North Sea Scenic Area: 130 yuan/bed in a four-bed room with bath. Rooms are cleaner than the former hotel.

between two expansive valleys, and felt a thrilling excitement. It seemed to me the 1,000 words he wrote were well worth it.

Friendship on the Road

The next day, I watched the sunrise at Bright Summit. After 7 a.m. I walked towards the less popular White Cloud Scenic Area which I had not visited on my previous tour. It was extremely quiet on the way. Not another soul was there so I enjoyed the vast landscape at will, all by myself. Bushes on the slopes had turned yellow or red, signalling the arrival of autumn. The scenery was gorgeous. Better still, with no tour groups about, I could experience the natural tranquillity. At Buxian (Stepping to Immortality) Bridge, I spent 45 minutes admiring the wonderful scenes before heading back.

Sometime after 9 a.m. I met the students at Flying-in Rock as planned. I had spent the previous night at the White Cloud Hotel which I had booked on the Internet. But the students thought the rooms for four or six people (80 yuan/bed) did not suit them. So they walked for another hour to try their luck at the North Sea Hotel. Most mainland students live on a small budget and any money for travel is saved out of their basic daily expenses.

One student insisted on carrying one of my three bags. He was so polite and sincere that I finally accepted his help by giving him the bag. On the way, they all offered to share their snacks and drinks with me. It was pleasant to chat and laugh with them while admiring the beautiful scenery. We toured the Paiyun (Cloud Dispersing) Scenic Area together, then separated at the fork leading to the North Sea Scenic Area and Bright Summit, respectively. I would stay overnight on the mountain while they would return, via Yuping Tower, back down the mountain to their hotel. We exchanged addresses and said goodbye. Before parting, I gave them two new rolls of film as I knew they had almost finished theirs and film was expensive in the mountain shops. Since then, we have kept in touch by e-mail. It is wonderful to make friends with people from different places during a trip.

Porters on Mount Huangshan

I checked into my hotel at noon and had a rest in my room. After 4 p.m. I set out with my camera and tripod.

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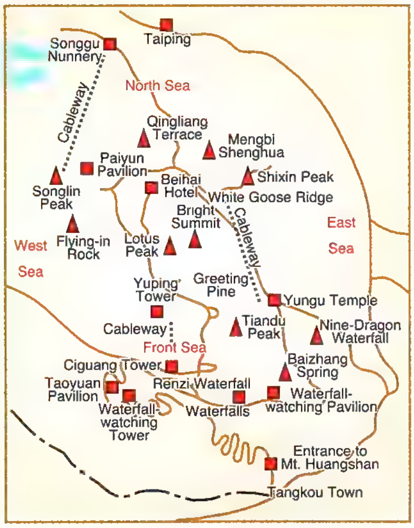
The setting autumn sun had dyed the peaks a warm, golden hue, in striking contrast to the silvery world of winter. I admired the evening glow at Paiyun Pavilion before returning to the hotel.

On the third morning, Qingliang (Cool) Terrace was crowded with people before daybreak. I was lucky to find a place to stand to view the Monkey Watching the Sea. Clouds drifted round the peaks like ribbons.


Songgu Nunnery
Taiping
Cableway
North Sea
Qingliang Terrace
Mengbi Shenghua
Paiyun Pavilion
Songlin Peak
Beihai Hotel
Shixin Peak
White Goose Ridge
Bright Summit
Cableway
East Sea
West Sea
Flying-in Rock
Lotus Peak
Yuping Tower
Greeting Pine
Yungu Temple
Cableway
Tiandu Peak
Nine-Dragon Waterfall
Front Sea
Ciguang Tower
Baizhang Spring
Taoyuan Pavilion
Renzi Waterfall
Waterfall-watching Tower
Waterfalls
Waterfall-watching Pavilion
Entrance to Mt. Huangshan
Tangkou Town

Eventually the sun climbed up through the clouds. The ragged peaks of the Eighteen Arhats appeared in strange shadows while the Monkey Watching the Sea, cast in the sun's rays, was more attractive. The sunshine spread on me, too, expelling the cold from my body. Mount Huangshan greeted a new day.

I went down the mountain from White Goose Ridge, meeting many tourists and porters along the way. There was almost everything in the porters' loads, including fuel, canned beer, vegetables, eggs and grain. Instead of taking a cableway, they had to walk up the mountain step by step. After hauling a load of 50 kg which took a man several hours, he only made around 30 yuan. It was a hard life.

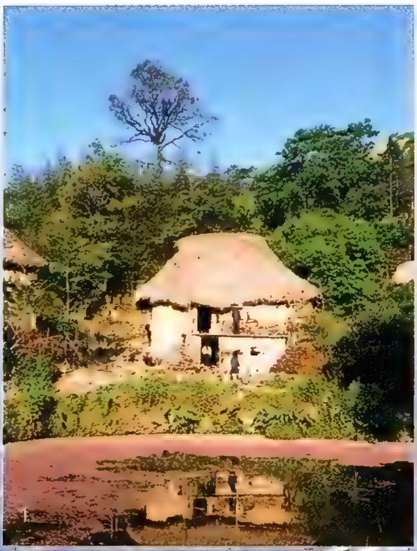
Postscript

After visiting Mount Huangshan in winter and autumn, I learnt that the mountain has different but equally charming scenery in both seasons. Now I'm considering visiting in spring and summer to see what it's like at those times of year.

1. **There is a pine tree named "Greeting Pine" at Yuping Tower. Similar pine trees grow all around the area.**
2. **Scenery near the West Sea Hotel.**
3. **Sunrise on the Monkey Watching the Sea.**
4. **Eighteen Arhats Facing the South Sea in shadow at daybreak.**
5. **Many tourists walk up the mountain on the trail starting from Yungu Temple.**

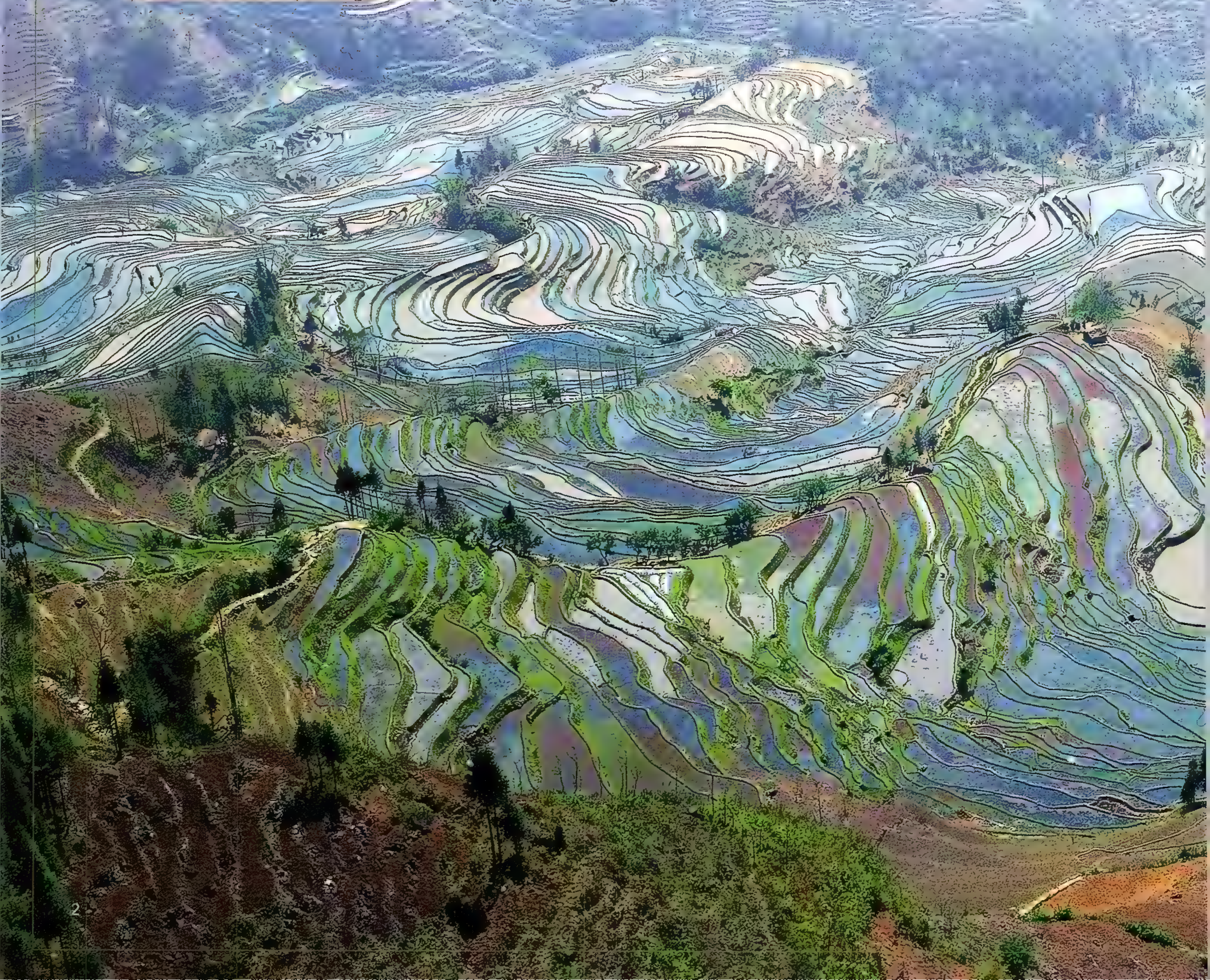
DISCOVERIES

MY FIVE DAYS OF CUSTODY IN JIANZHU



Photos by Ma Liwen, Tan Ming, Guo Jianshe Article by Ma Liwen

For people who love natural scenery and ethnic customs, Yuanyang County of the Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture in southwestern Yunnan Province is undoubtedly one of the best places to visit. The county has 24,000 hectares of terraced rice paddies and many villages inhabited by a total of seven ethnic minority groups. I heard about a village there called Jianzhu and visited it with curiosity. Unexpectedly, I was taken into custody for five days in the village.



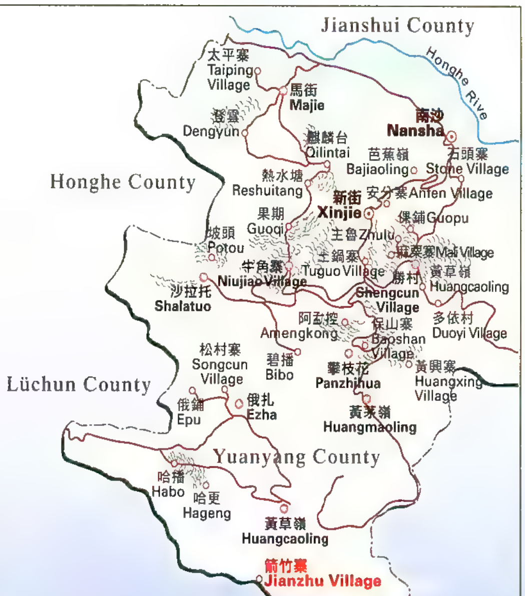
In an area ranging between 140 and 2,000 metres above sea level, the terraced rice fields, in various shapes and sizes, spread across the valleys, creating a spectacular, silvery sea. The ethnic peoples in Yuanyang maintain their unique cultures and lifestyles and know little about the wider world.

Not Visited by Outsiders for Two Years

I was told that Jianzhu Village was seldom visited by outsiders, had no electricity and used no currency in commercial dealings. Driven by curiosity, I took a bus for four hours and then walked another nine hours the next day before arriving in the village at sunset.

Jianzhu is the furthest village from the county seat and most of the residents are of the Yi ethnic minority. They speak both the Yi and Hani languages. Fortunately, I know their languages. The village head was a man in his 60s who spoke no Mandarin. Delighted at my arrival, he said that there had not been any other outside visitors for two years. He welcomed me with some home-brewed wine and kindly lent me his straw rain cape to use as bedding. He kept a fire pan going in the room, allowing me to have a nice, warm sleep.

He visited the county seat more than two decades ago to attend a conference about learning from the model agricultural village of Dazhai in North China's Shanxi Province. Unable to understand a word the speaker was saying, he was attracted by a light bulb dangling on a "rope" hanging from a beam in the conference hall. He concentrated so fiercely on it that the leader presiding over the


Jianshui County
Honghe River
Honghe County
Lüchun County
Yuanyang County
太平寨 Taiping Village
馬街 Majie
登雲 Dengyun
南沙 Nansha
麒麟台 Qilintai
芭蕉嶺 Bajiaoling
石頭寨 Stone Village
熱水塘 Reshuitang
新街 Xinjie
安分寨 Anfen Village
果期 Guoqi
倮鋪 Guopu
坡頭 Potou
主魯 Zhulu
土鍋寨 Tuguo Village
麻栗寨 Mali Village
牛角寨 Niujiao Village
勝村 Shengcun Village
黃草嶺 Huangcaoling
沙拉托 Shalatuo
阿勐控 Amengkong
保山寨 Baoshan Village
多依村 Duoyi Village
松村寨 Songcun Village
碧播 Bibo
攀枝花 Panzhihua
黃興寨 Huangxing Village
俄鋪 Epu
俄扎 Ezha
黃茅嶺 Huangmaoling
哈播 Habo
哈更 Hageng
黃草嶺 Huangcaoling
箐竹寨 Jianzhu Village

Sketch Map of Terraced Fields in Yuanyang

1. Jianzhu, the village most remote from the Yuanyang county seat, had not been visited by outsiders for more than two years. (by Ma Liwen)
2. Yuanyang boasts 24,000 hectares of terraced paddies which spread across the mountains and present spectacular views. (by Tan Ming)

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meeting praised him for his attentiveness at the conference. Before he went home, the village head planned to steal the bulb. So in the middle of the night, he got out of bed and ripped down the bulb along with the piece of wire. The first thing he did when he got home was to tell all the villagers to come and see the light. He hung the bulb from the beam and said that when night fell, it would light up the dark. They all waited until dawn but nothing happened.

I wandered around the village in the morning and found there were over 80 rammed earth houses on the sunny side of the slope. Above them on the mountain was an endless stretch of forests, and to the left and right of the houses were bamboo groves and mixed forests. On the hills in front of the village, rice paddies extended down to the riverbank deep in the valley.

Villagers Scared of Me

I took photographs in the village. Seeing a stranger holding an odd contraption, the adult villagers, scared, all retreated to their houses and closed the doors behind them. Children with timid and curious looks closed around me. I focused my camera on the houses and on people who, wearing puzzled expressions, could not comprehend what I was doing. So it remained until the third day when some adults, though still shying away, no longer shut their doors on me. Some 20 to 30 kids followed me around all day long, intently watching every move I made. Whenever I threw away film containers, they vied for them as if they were great treasures. Suddenly a man in his 40s came up to me with a smile, saying: "How do you do! My name is Li Bao. When did you arrive?"

It was a happy surprise, for I was not expecting anyone here to speak Mandarin. Li told the others: "What he has is called a 'camera'. It can take your images and then reveal them."

Li Bao was the icon of the youths in Jianzhu Village. He was not only the second person ever to go to the county seat, but also the only one who spoke Mandarin. A decade before, as the crops were ripening, a couple of brown bears from the mountains came and damaged half of the fields. People tried hard to chase the animals away, but could not get rid of them. The hot-blooded Li walked for a whole day to borrow a gun from a neighbouring village and went to shoot the bears. An irritated bear charged at a youth. Li opened fire and the bullet went through both the bear and the young man. No one said a thing, for if the youth had not been gunned down, he would have been crushed to death by the falling bear. A year later, however, two policemen came and took Li away. He was charged with manslaughter and sentenced to four years' imprisonment. When he returned after serving his term, he seemed like an immortal from the sky, telling the villagers things which they had never heard before and found fascinating. Because of his knowledge, whenever there was something to do with the outside world, villagers turned to Li for the final say.

Accused of Stealing Souls

That same day as I was trying to take a series of pictures of cloth being woven in the primitive way, a woman in her 50s came over and grabbed my bag of film. Then she blocked my lens with her body to stop me from continuing. She claimed that I had taken away the souls of all the villagers and disaster would soon descend upon them. No matter how I tried to explain, she would not listen. She took rolls of shot film out of the bag, ordering me to release the souls. Gosh! That

would have been taking my soul away! How could I surrender more than 20 rolls of film taken over the last three days? As I tried to reason with her, people began to gather round us and the woman insisted that unless I released the souls, not only would the rolls of film and the camera be smashed, but I would be thrown into the river to feed the fish.

I realised arguing was useless. Only Li Bao could save me. So I said: "Ok. You say I have taken away the souls; do you want to see your souls?" No one answered. I took the opportunity to continue: "Look, since you have not seen what your souls look like, I will bring them out to show you in a few days' time. Now go and get Li Bao." The disgruntled woman could not help but consent: "Ok. Since you speak our language and are also an ethnic minority, you have five days to release the souls. During that time, you cannot go one step out of the village and cannot use your camera anymore, or you will bear the consequences." She assigned six or seven young men to watch me closely.

Li Bao came and I explained everything to him. Then I pulled out 480 yuan, all the money I had, and gave him 400 yuan, asking him to go to the county seat and have the films developed. I besieged him to come back within five days.

Power Struggle Between the Doctor and the Witch

The woman with such great authority turned out to be a witch. In Jianzhu Village, four people enjoy high status: the village head; the herbal medicine doctor; the witch; and the sacrificial ceremony master. The first two deal with people while the latter two deal with spirits. The village head has been appointed for 40 years. Since the village has no disputes over land, between neighbours or in the households, it only takes him two days a year to do business. After the autumn harvest, he organises each family to deliver 15 kg of grain as tax to the village office. Then at the end of the year, he makes a headcount of each household. The master of sacrificial ceremonies presides over rituals in all ceremonies, including weddings and funerals. There are no written texts of their religion and he simply chants in his own style. Nobody understands what he is saying and he never explains either.

The herbal medicine doctor is none other than Li Bao who learnt from another herbal medicine doctor while in prison. However, before he had fully learnt the science, he was discharged, so he could only handle the most common ailments. Curing dysentery and bone fractures is his speciality. Whatever the result, he would not accept payment. He often clashes with the witch, for she holds that plant leaves and roots have no effect on ailments. If they do have, she argued, they would have been gods, which have to be protected. In which case, if villagers dig up plant roots, they would surely die as a punishment. Li retorts that if by singing and dancing people can cure their ailments, as the witch insists, the patients can sing and dance by themselves, instead of asking her to do it for them. Meanwhile, the villagers make their own decisions. When they have a bone fracture or dysentery, they go to Li Bao for treatment, while they turn to the witch for other diseases.

The witch commands all the spirits in the village and insists that everything in the world has a soul. When somebody is sick, she says that the person has been possessed by a ghost that had to be purged. If somebody dies, it is because the deceased had failed to beg for protection from the gods. Sick villagers ask the witch to exorcise the ghosts, and every other year each person has to ask the witch to help protect his or her life. Of the four most respected villagers, the witch is the busiest and has the greatest power. She is also the only person who accepts payment for her services. The charge for spirit-chasing

1. **Seven different ethnic minority groups live in Yuanyang, including the Hanis. (by Guo Jianshe)**
2. **The flooded paddies present an intoxicating view. (by Tan Ming)**
3. **A huge pipe made of bamboo.**
4. **In Jianzhu Village, everyone dutifully tends their responsibilities, tilling their share of the land, living a simple, happy life. (by Ma Liwen)**

was 10 kg of unhusked rice, two kg of husked rice and a chicken. She reasons if she does not take payment, the ghost would hang around. The return of Li Bao, however, had cut her influence in half.

The Good Old Days

During the five-day surveillance, I was kept in the village head's house. Gradually, the watchmen relaxed and began to talk to me. They said that about 300 years ago, their tribal head had brought the whole village to this place by chasing a wounded red deer. When they discovered the place was spacious, abundant with plants and animals, they settled down and lived for over 100 years as hunters. Then, the animals became fewer so they began tilling the land for another hundred years. They switched to farming entirely some 60 years ago. They said their village was much livelier in the old days a century ago, with one or two outsiders coming every day to cut bamboo with which to make arrows. That was probably how the village got its name, which literally means "arrow bamboo". Later when rifles appeared, the bow and arrow fell out of use, so there were no more visitors.

The villagers of Jianzhu live in harmony, sharing all the resources except the terraced rice paddies, which are clearly divided. They follow the seasons to sow and harvest. The vast land and adequate water supply leave them unaware of natural calamities and hunger. Each person dutifully carries out his responsibilities, building houses, working in the fields and helping others during weddings and funerals.

On the afternoon of the eighth day, Li Bao returned and the whole village excitedly rushed to surround him. People looked at their "souls", surprised and overjoyed. I was told that the witch had gone to the pond to tend her ducks.

Translated by F. Huang

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Tips for the Traveller

○ **Transport:** The county seat of Yuanyang refers to two towns; the older one, Xinjie, is 326 km from Kunming and the new one, Nansha, is 294 km from the provincial capital. From the Nanyao Bus Station in Kunming, coaches depart every morning at 10:00. There are also three overnight sleeper buses, which leave for Yuanyang via Jianshui at 19:00. Fare: 40 yuan. Groups may charter a bus for 300 to 400 yuan. Buses also go to Yuanyang from Dali, Xishuangbanna, Simao and Luchun.

○ **Accommodation:** Photographers are advised to stay at the Yuanyang Reception House in the old county seat. Standard room: 120 yuan.

○ **Climate:** The county has two seasons, spring and summer, and temperatures range from 0 °C to 31°C .

○ **Photography Tips:** The old county seat is an ideal place to view the sun rising from a sea of clouds. The best season for taking pictures runs from April 20 to May 10. Just before the rainy season begins, the air during this period is clear, good for photographing views both far and near. The next best time is in January and early February. Although often shrouded in fog, one good day in Jianzhu is enough for photographers. This also happens to be the holiday period for the ethnic minorities, offering more subjects for photography. The third choice is from early February to April 20 when the valleys are often filled with spectacular seas of clouds. Every day is good enough to take pictures, but the drawback is that the air is not transparent enough, which is okay for near views but not good for distant shots. On a bright day right after a rain, the views are fantastic.

Yuanyang County has no tourism bureau, but the Yuanyang Photographers' Association has a service department in the above mentioned reception house in the old county seat. For enquiries, call: (873) 562 1907 / 13887318119.

○ **Suggested Routes:** Set out from the old county seat in the morning and go southwest to Tuguo Village, five kilometres away, to view the sunrise over terraced rice paddies. Then press on to the Jingkou Hani Culture Village (six km from the old county seat). Beautiful views of terraced fields can be found 18 km further on at Laohuzui and Ameng. Three more kilometres away are the terraced fields at Baoshan Village, known locally as the "Seven Ladders".

Go 15 km from Baoshan Village to the settlement of Dai people at Huangmaoling. There is an expansive rubber tree forest 36 km from the county town. Habo, 63 km away, is the best place to view the sunrise over the terraced fields.

The village office is located in Habo and there is a six-bed hostel as well, charging 10 yuan per bed. Travelling southeast from here you eventually reach Jianzhu Village. The road is in very bad condition; while at some sections the path is one metre wide, the narrowest part is only 0.1 metre. Along the way, you will cross several ridges and very often have to bend back tree branches to make way for yourself. The time it takes varies from person to person. Experienced mountain hikers average about nine hours while novices may need 12 hours to reach Jianzhu Village. Less than 10 people conquer this path each year.

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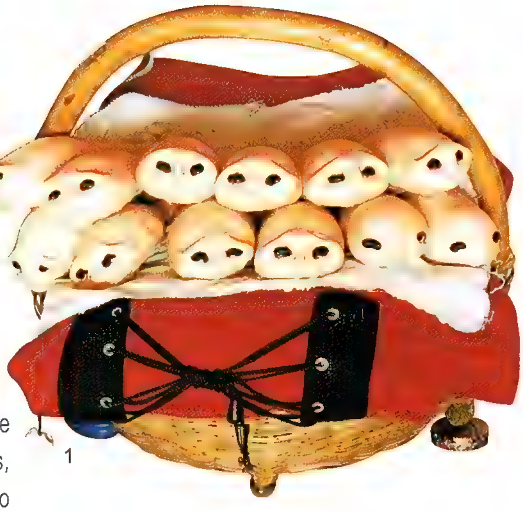
1. The picturesque landscape of Jianzhu.
2. A young villager and his dog.

Zhuiba: A Special Kind of Bread

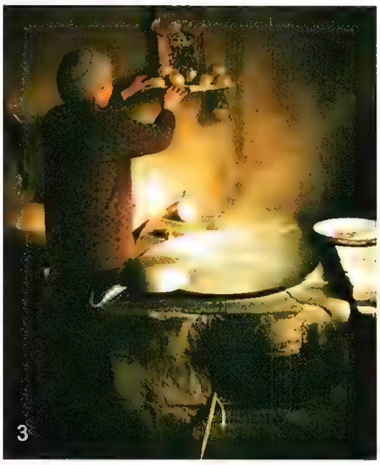
Photos by Shao Yong
Article by Qin Ling



People in Guanzhong of Shaanxi and eastern Gansu make a steamed bread called zhuiba on the 15th day of the first Chinese lunar month. It tastes the same as ordinary steamed bread, but is given a longer and more rounded shape with two black soybean eyes and a tail. It is called zhuiba because it resembles an awl used to make cloth shoes. In the Qianyang area it is called a "mouse". It is called a "cocoon" in the region south of the Weihe River in Shaanxi. Despite its many different names, the ingredients, cooking method and shape are the same everywhere.

Zhuiba functions in many ways. On the morning of the 15th day of the first Chinese lunar month, every family presents three to six pieces of zhuiba to the Six Household Gods, such as the God of Earth and the God of Food. Early the next morning, these offerings will be shared by the family. People also present zhuiba to the temple to pray for good fortune. Zhuiba is also a sacrifice to the ancestors.

Women often steal zhuiba from the offerings of families with many children, in the hope that after eating such zhuiba, they will become mothers. In the Qianyang area, every year before the 15th day, the family of an engaged man sends two lanterns to the future daughter-in-law's family. Inside each lantern there should be two pieces of connected zhuiba — a symbol of reproduction. Also before the 15th, a woman married in the previous year should go back to her mother's or aunt's home for a few days. This custom is called "Escaping the Lanterns". On the 16th day, she goes to the home of her parents-in-law early in the morning, where she is given two lanterns, clothing and other gifts. They must also present her with six pairs of zhuiba, each connected by the tails. Furthermore, when she returns home, her husband's sisters throw a pair of connected zhuiba through the window into the couple's bed. Then they rush into the room and have a look: if the bottoms face up, the wife will give birth to a girl; if the bottoms face down, the first birth must be a boy.



A special kind of zhuiba is also hung above the newlyweds' bed. After a child is born, the zhuiba is moulded into the shape of a fish or dragon to ensure that the child will be talented and useful in the future.

The origin of making zhuiba on the 15th day of the first Chinese lunar month derived from the ancient practice of divination by cocoon and worshipping the God of the Cocoon some 3,000 years ago.

Translated by Yu Ling

1. **Zhuiba are presented to the new daughter-in-law on the 16th day of the first lunar month.**
2. **This special bread is appreciated by both adults and children.**
3. **On the morning of the 15th day of the first Chinese lunar month, every family presents zhuiba to the Six Household Gods.**
4. **Taking zhuiba and lanterns to a future daughter-in-law.**

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DINING IN GUIZHOU AND GUANGXI

Photos by Chan Yat Nin   Article by Lu Shan

Editor's note: The author, an avid traveller, sees changes taking place everywhere with globalisation. While appreciating the remaining traces of the fading history and traditions, she also dines on native cuisine to immerse herself in local life.

3

Stop 1

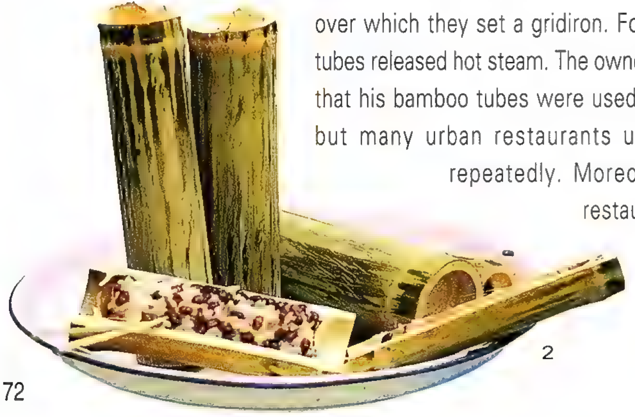
Longsheng County, Guangxi Province

Besides the beautiful scenery of terraced fields and seas of cloud, Longsheng County also boasts Zhuang delicacies. Here, the sweet water produces tasty vegetables. The very first night, I surrendered to some simple, stir-fried vegetables and deep-fried bean curd (tofu). It was as if all the vegetables and tofu I'd eaten before had not been the real stuff!

The Zhuang Rice in a Bamboo Tube

The next morning, while walking through an ancient village in Longsheng, I passed the Seven-Star Special Dishes Restaurant, which was advertising "Zhuang Bamboo Rice", "Original Chicken", "Rice Wine" and "Dumplings with Sesame Filling." All special dishes must be ordered half a day in advance, so I ordered two dishes of fried vegetables and arranged to try the Bamboo Rice at 6:30 p.m.

Even before six I was rushing to the restaurant. The owner and his nephew was building a fire with bamboo ships, over which they set a gridiron. Four bamboo tubes released hot steam. The owner explained that his bamboo tubes were used only once, but many urban restaurants used theirs repeatedly. Moreover, some restaurants even cooked the rice first then put it in the tubes, so it carried no delicate bamboo fragrance. In his restaurant, the rice must be cooked in the tubes over the fire for 40 minutes. He took a bite of the potato that he used to seal the bamboo tube, saying that when it was cooked, the rice was ready.



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After cooking, the tubes were cut open with a knife. A heady aroma of rice and bamboo rose up. The locally-produced rice has to be soaked for half a day before it is cooked in the tube together with preserved meat, diced mushrooms, shredded edible fungus and spring onions.

Hongyao Chicken

On the third day, I asked Pan Yufeng and Pan Liujiao, two Hongyao ladies from Huangluo Village, to be our guides and went to their village to savour the local chicken.

The first task was to catch a chicken, a genuine local chicken. This was quite difficult as chickens are scarce during the day, coming home only at night. One of the women headed back to her home on the mountain. Half an hour later, she returned, her forehead bathed in sweat, holding a chicken with black, shiny feathers, a small head and yellow claws. Though I had paid 20 yuan, the care they were taking seemed worth much more.

The chicken was stewed with salt and several pieces of ginger. An intoxicating aroma filled the air. The chicken was extremely appetising, smooth and tender. I then tried another mouth-watering specialty, stir-fried dried rock fish. Last but not least, I had a dish of freshly-picked vegetables.

Stop 2

Congjiang, Guizhou Province

In Congjiang, Dongs and Miaos live together. On the fourth day, I hired a car to Xiaohuang, a Dong village known as the "hometown of songs". It took two hours and 20 minutes to travel the 28 km rugged mountain road.

Dong Red Meat

This speciality, named for its appearance, is cooked pork mixed with various spicy ingredients, sprinkled with fresh blood. Apparently the villagers had just killed a pig and the blood was fresh from its thorax. So, it was very clean, I was told. However, I felt queasy and decided to wait for another meal. Then, the driver and some young men sat round the meat, drinking wine and calling: "Cheers! Cheers! Cheers!"

What a scene! I left quickly, in case they got too greedy and bit my neck for blood. I had no wish to become another Dracula!

Stop 3

Rongjiang, Guizhou Province

I moved on to Chejiang in Rongjiang, about 40 km from Congjiang. I was disappointed that the people and the houses had been strongly influenced by today's Han culture. Only their diet hasn't changed.

Dong Roasted Fish and Preserved Meat

In a restaurant called Renhe Sanbao, which boasted a picturesque view, I asked the owner for some special dishes. He showed me two huge black jars of preserved fish and meat. The food can remain in the salt and chilli for a few months or even a few years without going off. The longer it cures, the tastier it will be. I immediately ordered some of the meat, then asked the owner how they cooked the fish. "We grill it!" So I feasted on grilled fish, a bowl of vegetables and tofu soup, too.

The owner made a small charcoal fire on the ground and grilled the fish on a gridiron over the flames. Then, he added a handful of greens to the gridiron, but he wanted more colour. Without asking if I could eat spicy food, he tossed in two red chillis. Meanwhile, he chose a piece of red-orange preserved meat from the pot, washed away the chilli and grilled it as well.

Sitting round a table beside the field, I ate a flavourful meal and gazed at the scenery; all this for only 13 yuan.

4

The Dong Cow's Gastric Juice

Then the owner produced a bottle of light yellow juice, calling it "Xiang Niu Bie" (an odd name!). To make it, he first drove a cow to a fertile mountain slope where abundant herbs grew. After letting it eat its fill, he drove it back and killed it (how cruel it seemed!). From the animal's stomach he removed the half-digested grasses, squeezing out the mixture of herbal and intestinal juices. After a simple filtration process, he mixed this with wine and stored it for a time. According to him, meat cooked with this famous local marinade is delicious and effectively cures gastric disease.

However, I declined to try it for I couldn't imagine tasting a cow's gastric juice.

Stop 4

Kaili, Guizhou Province

Kaili, my last stop, houses the government of the Southeastern Guizhou Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture. Here I bargained over some amazing embroideries in the stands outside the Minzu Hotel.

Potato Cake, Deep-fried Blighted Tofu

Two snacks were being sold everywhere. One was made from minced potato pressed into little cakes, with salt and spring onions added. The cakes were fried until golden. When I divided the cake with a pair of chopsticks, the fragrance came out with the steam and the soft potato melted in the mouth. The deep-fried smelly tofu was mild. While frying, the aroma developed into a rich fragrance, and the taste was wonderful. After a leisurely chat with the vendor, I was only asked to pay 1.5 yuan.

Vegetables in Sour Soup

Although I missed the chance to taste fish cooked in sour soup, I was given a free portion of sour soup after buying two dishes from the takeaway at the Minzu Hotel that night. There were only a few big vegetable leaves, soya bean sprouts, two slices of ginger and some unknown herbs in the soup, but it tasted delicious. The following morning, before catching my train, I went to the store and drank another big bowl of sour soup, my last delicacy of the trip!

Translated by Kristy Wong

1. **A Dong village in Congjiang, Guizhou.**
2. **Authentic Zhuang Bamboo Rice.**
3. **Enjoying local cuisine with a Zhuang family in Longsheng, Guangxi.**
4. **Dong-style preserved fish in Chejiang, which is cured with salt and chilli for a few months or even years.**
5. **The celebrated Fish in Sour Soup at the Happy Valley Restaurant in Kaili, Guizhou.**

Tiaohua Festival of the Xiaohua Miao People

Photos & article by Wu Dongzun

Xiaohua (Lesser Flower) is a branch of the Miao, one of China's minority ethnic groups. Its people inhabit the Wumeng Mountain on the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau. Their dozens of villages are scattered in more than 20 townships in the counties of Shuicheng, Nayong, Hezhang and Weining in Guizhou Province. As communications are poor, this area is fairly cut off from the outside world. On their arable hilly land, they grow corn, potatoes, buckwheat, sweet potatoes, etc. On the 15th day of the second lunar month, when the land begins to revive, people of this ethic group gather in Nankai Township in Shuicheng County from all parts of the province to celebrate the traditional annual event – the Tiaohua Festival.

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It is the most important festival of the people of the Lesser Flower Miao. Even more people came to mark the event in conjunction with the millennium last year. About 50,000-60,000 people gathered in the quiet Pianpo Village in Nankai Township. The two hills near the village were virtually covered with people, not to mention the crowds on the flat land. Some brought the whole family from 40-50 km away, wearing their best clothes and carrying food and other delicacies. The youngsters played lusheng pipes, danced or looked for a sweetheart. The elderly visited friends and relatives, amused their grandchildren in the early spring sunshine, and ate rice and juicy seasoned meat from plastic bags. Girls zigzagged amidst the crowds, toting tape-recorders playing pop music. It was a sea of people, a sea of songs. The Lesser Flower Miao people sang and danced, thoroughly enjoying the grand festival. Brides who had any grievances cried on the shoulders of their parents. In turn, the parents consoled and encouraged their daughters.

It is human nature to love beautiful things. In the past, women of the Lesser Flower Miao coiled their hair and fastened it atop their heads, a hair style neat and simple. Nowadays, as the standard of living improves, they prefer to use colourful cashmere strands to make headdresses.

As the market economy develops, the local people's mentality begins to change. At the festival, stalls selling snacks and other products appeared. Even a makeshift photography studio was erected, something unheard of in the past. The people involved in these businesses were all local residents of the Lesser Flower group.

When the sun set, people began to disperse and return home. Filing through the trees, women in brilliant headdresses were like flames or shooting stars against a green background, creating a sense of mystery. Many people, youngsters in particular, stayed dancing and singing around bonfires or courting until the next morning.

The Tiaohua Festival of the Lesser Flower Miao is impressive and full of fun. However, only the people of this group and a few photographers from outside come to celebrate the event. It is a pity that the colourful celebration has not been introduced to tourists at large because of inconvenient transport.

Translated by M. J. Wang

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Tiaohua Festival: A Brief Introduction

This traditional Miao festival was originally a grand party for couples who had not had their own children after several years of marriage. Today, however, it is celebrated with a wider meaning. It is usually held during the second month of the year and lasts for three days. In the daytime, people play lusheng pipes and fiddles and sing and dance. At night, young men and women court each other. Elderly people usually sit and drink wine around the bonfire. (Reference: *ABCs About Minority Nationalities*, Nationality Publishing House, 1st edition, March 1988).

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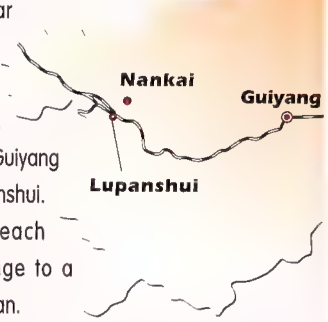
1. The eye-catching large headdresses decorated with cashmere.
2. A girl carrying her boom box from which love songs are being played.
3. An elderly Miao lady giving her bright, innocent smile.
4. Girls tidy themselves up before having their pictures taken in the photography studio.
5. Enjoying the food they have brought to the festival site.
6. Like brilliant flames, the participants walk home in the dusk.

Tips for the Traveller

- **Travel Time**

The Tiaohua Festival takes place from the 14th to the 16th of the 2nd month of the lunar calendar. The main festival day is the 15th. Demonstrations of local customs are usually held on the 16th.

Transport: Take either the train from Guiyang to Kunming or from Guiyang to Lupanshui. It takes about four hours to reach Lupanshui where you may change to a minibus to Nankai for a fare of 10 yuan.



- **Accommodation**

The hostel in Nankai Township charges 10-15 yuan for a bed. Food is plentiful in the township market. You may choose from noodles with lamb or rice with separate dishes. It costs 3.5-10 yuan for a meal.

- **Climate**

In early spring, it is still quite cold and rain is frequent in Guizhou. Bring warm clothing.

6

Looking Back: A Trip to Beijing in 1997

Photos and article by Lee Soo San

In Beijing, four and a half years ago, my buddy Amy and I were amazed as we mounted the famous Great Wall, or ChangCheng, meaning "long wall".

It was a dry and very cold March afternoon. As we climbed higher, the winds blew swiftly across our faces. We clung tightly to the handrail as the wall and steps are really steep and eerie. There is blood in every stone along with the agony of the prisoners of war, soldiers, civilians and farmers who laboured to build it more than 2,000 years ago. Millions suffered and died from starvation and disease. It is believed that their bodies were buried in the foundations of the wall or used to make up its thickness. I shivered, as if I could hear the dead crying for help and mercy. Under the sovereignty of Qin Shihuang, the first exalted emperor who also unified China by destroying the divisive walls between the states, the new wall was constructed to keep nomadic northern tribes from invading. Ultimately, the Great Wall of China crossed over many mountains, valleys, rivers and deserts.

Another must-see place we visited was the Imperial Palace, or Forbidden City, built during the Ming Dynasty between 1406-1420.

The Meridian Gate (Wumen), the main entrance to the Forbidden City, was reserved solely for the emperor's use. The five marble bridges spanning the Golden Water Canal lead to the Gate of Supreme Harmony (Taihemen), guarded by a row of bronze lions. As we explored further into the heart of the palace, we saw the three great ceremonial halls, raised up on a three-tiered marble terrace. The largest hall is the Hall of Supreme Harmony (Taihedian) where the most important ceremonial occasions took place. The other two are the Hall of Central Harmony (Zhonghedian) and the Hall of Preserved Harmony (Baohedian). Moving eastward, we came to the famous Nine-Dragon Screen Wall, an exquisite wall of glazed ceramic relief tiles, featuring nine, colourful, five-toed dragons on either side.

Our next stop, the Summer Palace, was where the self-centred Dowager, Empress Cixi, indulged herself. We visited the museum (the former Hall of Mercy and Longevity), then, passing the Jade Waves Palace, where Emperor Guangxu was once imprisoned, we reached the Garden of Virtue and Harmony, dominated by a three-storey theatre where Empress Cixi watched opera performances. The Hall of Joyful Longevity on the west side served as her private residence. Walking further on, we arrived at the Long Gallery, parallel to the lake shore, where, at its western end, an attractive, mosaic-decorated Marble Boat was moored. The Summer Palace was built by Empress Cixi with money originally allocated for building the imperial navy.

On the fourth day of our trip, we visited the world's largest public square, Tian'anmen. The Gate of Heavenly Peace (Tian'anmen), the south gate of the Forbidden City, lies on busy Chang'an Boulevard running east to west. Across from Tian'anmen Square are two massive, Soviet-style buildings, the Great Hall of the People and the Museum of Chinese History. A huge digital display panel stood before the museum, counting down the minutes and seconds until the British would return Hong Kong to China a few months later. The highly regarded obelisk, the Monument to the People's Heroes, rises up in front of the Mausoleum of Mao Zedong, commemorating those who died for the country's revolutionary struggles. Every morning, Chairman Mao's preserved body is on display behind glass. I remember armed soldiers instructing each visitor, "Keep silent, stay in line, hats off and march slowly!" In the square outside, a gigantic portrait of Mao adorns the Gate of Heavenly Peace, memorialising the founder of the People's Republic of China.

By now it was half past noon. We had a quick meal before resuming our itinerary to the Temple of Heaven (Tiantan). As we left the local restaurant, we noticed an old man nodding and smiling at us. He sat by himself on an old wooden chair, wearing a Mao suit. In a warm, friendly manner, he asked whether we had had a meal. Apparently, what the Chinese enjoy most in their lives is eating. "*Chi le ma?*" (Have you eaten yet?) is not an unusual way for a conversation to begin. The old man told us he enjoyed sitting on his favourite chair each afternoon, watching people pass by at his leisure. We decided to take his picture before we bid him farewell.

We continued on to the Temple of Heaven, the Imperial Vault of Heaven where the Echo Wall is located, and then to the beautiful Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests. Our last stop was North Lake Park (Beihai Gongyuan), where visitors may hire boats in summer and skate on the frozen surface in winter. We had a clear view of the White Pagoda on Jade Island.

When we departed the following day on an early morning flight to Hong Kong, we were already missing the place terribly.

Touring Bashang in Golden Autumn

Photos & article by Mai Zhufa

On a friend's recommendation, I joined the eight-day tour organised by the Hong Kong China Tourism Company to Bashang in Hebei Province to see its golden autumn. I learned that the grassland was the royal hunting ground of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), and had also been the outdoor filming site for the TV series *Princess Huanzhu*. I began my trip with a light heart.

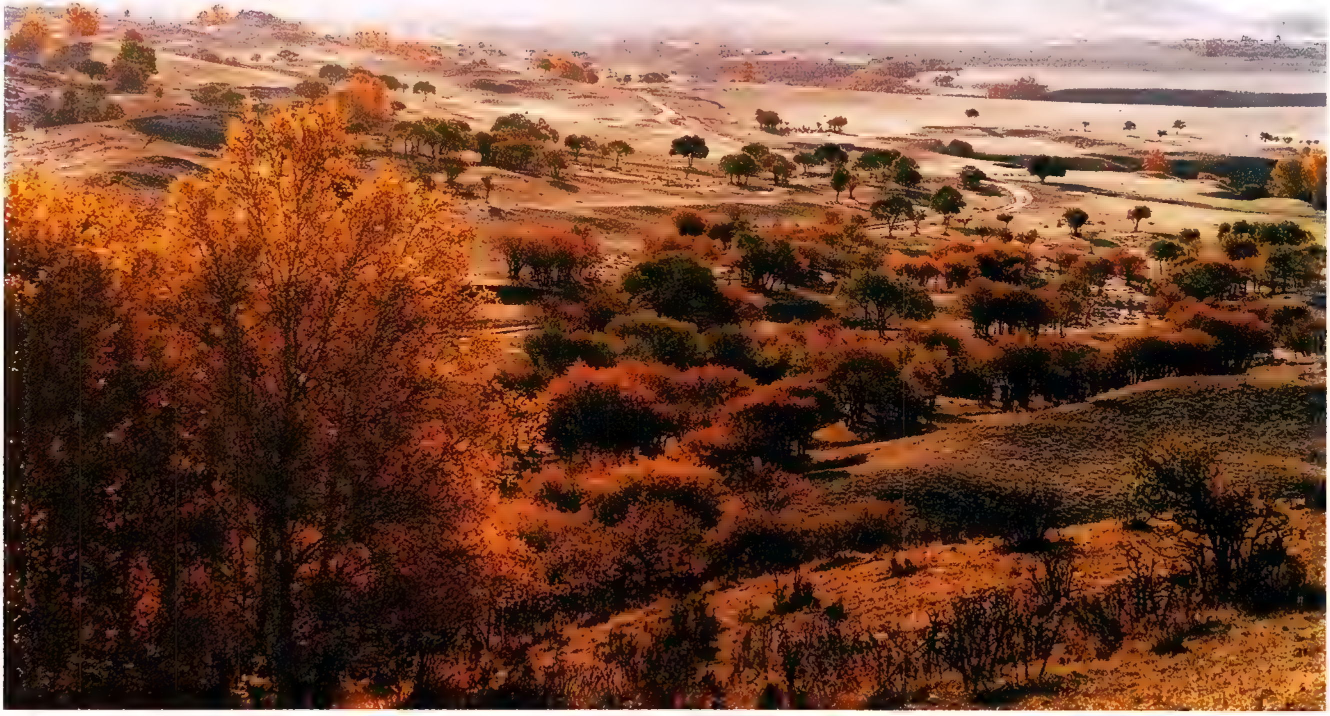
We stopped first to visit the Jinshanling (Golden Mountain Ridge) Great Wall. It was an arduous climb, but once atop the wall, seeing the impressive, well-preserved project left by our ancestors, I realised my journey was worthwhile. I had not expected a visit to the Great Wall.

The next day, we visited the Mountain Resort in Chengde. Two decades ago, I had been there with a group of photography fans. Dramatic changes have taken place in China over the past years since the policies for reform and opening up were adopted. While the Mountain Resort remained the same, tourist facilities in Chengde had improved a lot. The Chengde Hotel was one such example. The following day, we stayed in another hotel, which was similarly well run but located closer to the Bashang Grassland.

On the fourth morning, we rose at dawn and at 4:30 our group of 30 set out in jeeps, driving to a terrace to shoot the sunrise. We had all put on our warm clothes to protect ourselves from the chill wind. It was a long wait in the cold darkness. Gradually, the vast grassland, with its beautifully shaped mounds, revealed itself in the light. Never had I seen such glorious scenery. The landscape of our motherland was magnificent, and in front of this grandness I felt very small.

For four days, we travelled by jeep to take pictures of various scenes. At times we bumped along the mountain roads, unable to help feeling nervous, our hands grasping the seat handles tightly. It was a fruitful trip, which gave us a chance to appreciate nature. I have taken many photography trips, but this one was the most exciting, refreshing and interesting. The photos I took also turned out well.

Our tour guide did a wonderful job as well. Without her superb performance, our journey would not have been so successful. She was our "Golden Medal Tour Guide".



Walking on Cultural Horizons

Article by Li Limin

Many who have been to Suzhou have said: Although the buildings there are of the ancient style, it is a pity that the good old feelings of "listening quietly to the spring rain from within a small tower" and the familiar sight of "apricot blossoms being sold in the little narrow lanes" have been replaced by dazzling neon. The original image of Suzhou has faded and a light, untouchable fog descends upon the crowds coming and going in the pedestrian street.

I like to walk among the ancient ruins, but I know that all who long for a sense of the past are disappointed. Still, regret and disappointment have a beauty of their own. Only through changes in vision and scenery do we see the brilliant work of time. Those ancient ruins are but a mark of the passing years.

In my fourth year at university, I toured Wudang Mountain alone. Most of the tourists crowded around Zixiao Palace and the Golden Top which have been well protected and preserved, but I visited the Yuxu Palace ruins with the help of a tourist map. In the temple yard covered with wild grasses, only three foundation stones and two steles remained. Some broken railings of the palace gate and the paved path hundreds of metres long lay silently in the glow of the morning sun. Such common ancient ruins are bound to make many people grieve and ponder like pedantic scholars. Yet at that very moment, an orderly group of Taoist priests ran up towards the ruins along the paved path. With an increasing roar, a train approached and passed quickly along the raised roadbed beside the temple walls. The lifeless ruins suddenly acquired a flowing rhythm. The shadow of the years took on a touching lustre linking modern civilisation and the palace that stood no longer, flashing between the Taoist priests and the ruins behind them. It was so impressive that the image remains in my mind.

To me, the purpose of a trip to see ancient ruins is not so much for the ruins themselves, but for the atmosphere and the feelings one has at the sight of them. A tour is not desk-bound research and our destination is not antiquity. The articles on tours and contemplations by Yu Qiuyu are too demanding. What an ordinary tourist can feel is akin to walking at the edges of a culture. Ancient culture, often described as "the bright moon of the Qin Dynasty and the breeze blowing in the Han Dynasty", is thousands of years away from us. What we can touch is merely its essence, which embodies the difference between us and history while creating something beautiful and moving in our hearts.

When I visit ancient cities and temples, I often feel that without historical relics — the pressed flowers in our books, the grass- and tea-coloured pottery, the old city walls of Nanjing and the ancient courtyards by Hangzhou's West Lake — we would become ignorant and blind. Only ancient relics can tell us where we are. Yet I often wonder, too, that if Suzhou remained as it was during the era of the State of Wu, would I be able to appreciate it? In a place with no historical relics, one would have no sense of orientation. In a place completely in the past, one could not feel the beauty of the flow of time. I hope that the Ming-dynasty Palace in Nanjing can be preserved as well as the Forbidden City in Beijing and that Yuanmingyuan might regain its splendour of the late Qing Dynasty. Still, can you stop Beijing from having all these neon lights, stop the Su Causeway in Hangzhou from being paved with cement, stop Yangzhou from losing its ancient and indigenous prosperity, or stop Guanqian Street in Suzhou from being widened from four to 20 metres? It's true that there is nothing a tourist can do, but buried in this helpless melancholy is the beauty of quandary, which adds another dimension to the trip.

So, with a light and open heart, we may visit the old courtyards dwarfed by neighbouring skyscrapers and appreciate the Drum Tower besieged by a flood of cars. Without the passage of time, the ancient relics would lose their remote and eternal appeal.

My First Hot Spring Experience

Article by Mi Mi

The Wulai District in Taipei is well known for its hot springs.

After a 45-minute drive I arrived in the tourism area in Wulai. It was dizzying to look at the hot spring hotels all lined up along both sides of a narrow street. What concerned me most was hygiene, so I chose a comparatively expensive one. I had planned to enjoy the hot spring alone, but the attendant there insisted that I use the public bath because it was dangerous to bath by oneself in a closed room. If something wrong, no one would know. Besides, I would be among strangers; why should I mind? I decided to give it a try.

My vision is not good and not being able to wear my contact lenses made me even more nervous — my surroundings were a complete haze. I undressed and walked out wrapped in a towel. An elderly woman came up to me at once and asked me to leave the towel on a rack. Taking a deep breath, I went into the hot spring room. I could vaguely see many figures moving about but their faces were unclear. I felt that their eyes were on me, an outsider. I didn't want people to know that this was my first time. After all, I came from Hong Kong! I pretended to know what I was doing, following some people to the shower. I took up the nozzle and tried to turn on the tap. Why, something was strange about the devilish tap. No matter how hard I pressed on it, the water refused to come out. I was totally puzzled until the same elderly lady approached me again and said, "Miss, you are holding the cleaning hose." It turned out that what I was pressing on was not the tap, but a large joint in the pipe! She went on and asked, "Are you from Hong Kong, miss? Is this your first time here?"

I flushed a deep shade of red even before I started my hot spring bath. While laughing foolishly, I silently cursed that joint for looking so much like a tap. What a predicament!

Fond Memories of Nice

Article by Wiwi

Several years ago, my husband and I took a summer holiday to Austria, Switzerland and Italy. Then without stopping we continued by train to the French seaside city of Nice, neighbour of Cannes where the famous film festival takes place.

Maybe because of fatigue from travelling, the cold I had caught before the trip gradually worsened. The night we reached Nice, I could not go any further and early the next morning, lying in a room in a small inn beside the railway station, I was plagued by a high fever.

July is the peak tourist season in Europe. Luckily we had reserved our room in advance, because now the small, reasonably-priced hotel was fully booked. Dog tired from the night before, I didn't pay much attention to details but immediately went to the room to rest. I only remembered having to walk down a long, narrow corridor and go through a fire-proof door at the end to get to the room. The room itself was rather simple, lacking warmth and comfort, but I didn't notice this at first.

I lay awake in this Spartan room, feeling awful. My husband went to ask the hotel's owner if there was any doctor nearby. Soon a young French doctor arrived. He examined me and then said that I was simply worn down. He gave me an injection and some prescriptions, and asked my husband to get some medicine from a pharmacy. In Europe, hospitals and pharmacies are separate, so a doctor can't give a patient any medicine directly.

After I took the medicine, we began to discuss changing hotels. This could be difficult, because we had paid for a few days in advance. As total strangers, we could hardly hope to find a suitable place in a short time. My husband said that the couple who owned the hotel seemed very kind, so he would try to ask them for help. Before long, he returned with a waiter who brought us breakfast. My husband said rather happily that the hotel owner was not offended after hearing our slightly excessive request. Instead, he apologised for not being able to provide us a more suitable room. Furthermore, he offered to return the rent and called some other hotels to find a room to our satisfaction.

The complementary breakfast that morning was freshly baked French bread and delicious coffee. Maybe because the bread was so excellent or maybe because my mood had improved, I ate an entire order of bread which functioned even better than medicine. After that, I was addicted to French bread.

Since then several years have passed during which I have visited many more places and gained far more experience. Looking back, I find that what was most unforgettable and affecting was never scenery but people and events. They made the details of my trips more memorable and enjoyable. Scenery can only ever come second.

Landslide in the Sichuan Mountains

Article by Xiao Jin

In May 2001, two friends and I excitedly travelled to Sichuan. On the 12th day we took a bus from the popular tourist destination of Kangding to Danba. After leaving Kangding our bus turned from the paved highway to a bumpy, four-metre-wide earthen road flanked by high mountains. After gazing at the green mountains in the dim morning light for a while, I gradually fell asleep.

I don't know how long I had been sleeping when a faint noise woke me. I felt the bus had stopped and asked, half-asleep, if we had reached Danba. It turned out that just over 10 metres ahead of us a landslide was under way. Innumerable small stones kept dashing down from the mountain top. Large sections of the primitive road were covered with half-metre-deep piles of stones. Our bus had had to stop. The driver of the bus ahead of ours said it had started about 20 minutes before, and the greatest danger had passed. But to the three of us who had never seen such things it was very frightening. Had we been standing there and been hit by any chunks of stone, our heads would have been gashed open, considering the height from which these stones were falling. Other people told us that landslides often occur in the rainy season. Now I was fully awake, worrying about when we could leave the place.

An hour later, the "stone rain" seemed to trail off, with only two or three pieces occasionally skittering down. Our driver told us to seize the moment and run quickly through the dangerous zone while it was clear. Many passengers twisted their ankles on the uneven surface but were happy enough to have escaped the danger and not have to wait until dark or return to Kangding. But our worries returned when we saw that the bus ahead couldn't pass over the cluttered road and had to turn back because its chassis was too low. Our driver tried several times but had to give up halfway, too. Although feeling very tense ourselves, we tried to cheer him up. Only after three hours of repeated effort by our driver and some male passengers pushing from behind did our bus finally and fortunately move past the landslide area.

After this, I no longer complained about moving only 100 km in four or five hours. While we would have preferred to reach our destination without panic or danger, such an event made the trip even more memorable.

PHOTOGRAPHING FESTIVALS

CAPTURING THE SPIRIT OF CELEBRATION

Photos & article by Robert Jerome

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For the neophyte travel photographer, festivals are excellent for experimenting with people photography. During festivals, when people are costumed and in a buoyant mood, they are usually delighted to be photographed, and the hesitancy many photographers feel in approaching people to take their pictures evaporates. For more experienced photographers, the challenge of photographing festivals is one of translating a swirl of sensory input – dancing, singing, parades, vivid costumes – into the purely visual medium of photography.

Robert Jerome is a native New York photographer who has travelled extensively. In his 25-year career, he has visited over 60 countries. Religious ceremonies and other aspects of local life with a strong ethnic flavour are his favourite subjects. He shares some of his photography tips below.

The following are some tips to improve your festival photography:

TIP 1

Make travel arrangements early. Many festivals, such as pre-Lenten Carnivals in Rio de Janeiro and Venice, are world-class tourist events and cities holding such events swell to bursting during the holiday. In some instances, it is necessary to make arrangements a year in advance. Book a hotel near the festivities (to retreat to for an occasional respite) but far enough away to allow you a peaceful night's sleep.

TIP 2

Research the festival. Since many festivals are steeped in tradition, their programmes are often similar from year to year. Through websites or tourist boards, find out when key events such as parades are held and whether tickets or other prior arrangements are needed. With a bit of investigation, you'll know the cultural significance of what you are photographing and what

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constitutes appropriate subject matter.

TIP 3

Scout out the area where activities will take place. Before the crowds arrive, look for attractive backgrounds against which to photograph events. Telephone lines or unattractive buildings detract from otherwise colourful photographs.

TIP 4

Find an elevated vantage point from which to gain a broad perspective on the festivities. While you'll obviously want close-ups of some activities, it is wise to begin your photographic adventures from above. Not only does this allow you to photograph the full spectrum of festival events, but also you'll avoid the crush of the crowds below. If asked politely, many locals are happy to allow tourists to take photographs from their roofs or balconies.

TIP 5

Photograph festival activities rather than people posing in costume. With so many vibrant outfits, it's easy to let them become your focus. To capture the full spirit of the festival, take photos of people engaged in activities representative of the festival, whether singing, dancing, horseback riding or parading. Although you won't hear music when you look at your pictures, seeing people dancing and singing brings back the sounds and feel of the festival.

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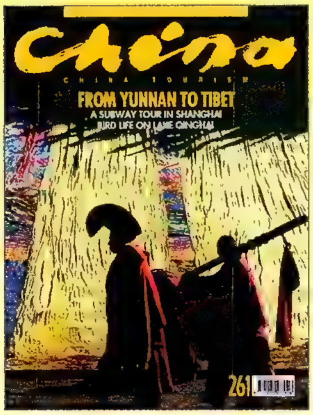
TIP 6

Immerse yourself in the festival. People in celebration are usually very happy when tourists join in. Festivals represent what people are most proud of in their culture, so even if you can't do all the steps to a particular native dance, try it and have one of the locals take YOUR picture for a change. That picture may turn out to be the most memorable one of all.

1. Confetti-throwing is a big part of Basel's Carnival celebration; here, a small boy throws confetti at his father.
2. Gleaming perspiration on this dancer in Rio's Sambrodromo conveys the fact that this carnival is a hot, steamy summer event.
3. While photographs obviously do not capture sound, this one clearly shows that singing is integral to the Carnival in Cadiz, Spain.
4. To capture the full effect of a parade, like this carnival procession in Elzach, a small village in Germany's Black Forest, it helps to have an elevated viewpoint.
5.-6. Horseback riding and dancing are two major activities of the spirited April Fair in Seville, Spain.
7. In Vilafranca del Penedes near Barcelona, Spain, the Diada Castellera de Sant Felix Festival is dramatically captured from a balcony.



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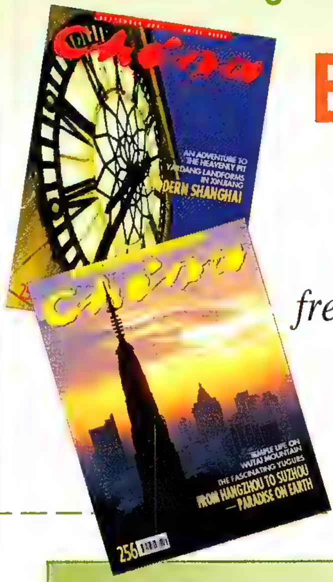
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Focus on Yunnan

The mountainous wonderland of Yunnan enjoys a favourable warm climate year round. Its capital, Kunming, sitting alongside Yunnan's largest lake, Dianchi, has the honourable name of "Spring City". The province is full of natural wonders and cultural relics, such as the Stone Forests, the Shangri-La, and the ancient cities of Dali and Lijiang. With over 20 diverse ethnic groups making up about one-third of the population, opportunities abound for you to see their characteristic cultures and customs.

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Focus on Fujian

Situated on the southeast coast, Fujian Province overlooks Taiwan Island across the Taiwan Strait. Its mountainous landscape includes the Wuyi Mountain Scenic Area, one of the UN World Heritage sites in China. The province's zigzag coastlines, numerous beaches and charming seas offer spectacular scenic beauty as well as historical and cultural interest in such places as the Drumming Wave Islet in Xiamen and the Mazu Temple in Meizhou Island.

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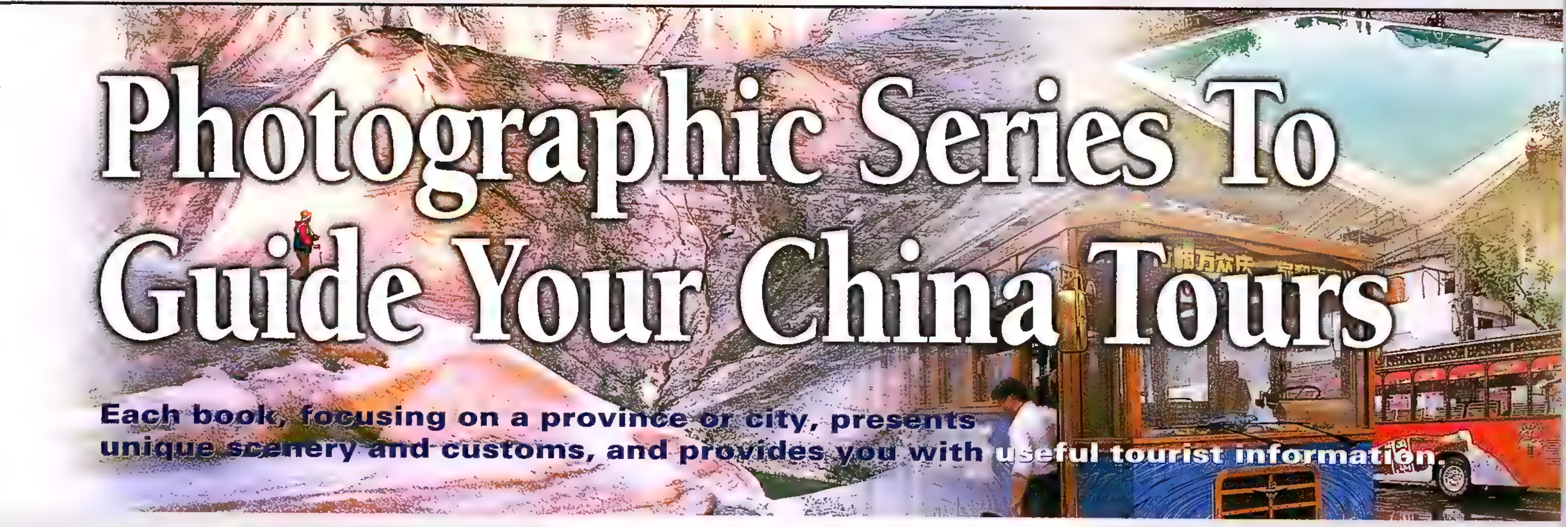
Focus on Shanghai

Shanghai, the largest metropolis in China, and formerly the Far East financial centre, has experienced dramatic development over the past century. The world-famous Bund along the Huangpu River shows you buildings of different historical periods and varied architectural styles, while skyscrapers are rising in the new area of Pudong. Shanghai's multiculturism is seen in its music — operas, nostalgic jazz and discos — and in the busy commercial district of Nanjing and Huaihai roads.

滬
Focus on Shanghai



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Focus on Shaanxi

Shaanxi is the cradle of the Chinese civilisation and Xi'an was the capital of 13 dynasties. This has left Shaanxi a rich legacy of historical sites and cultural relics. In the provincial capital Xi'an, there is the fascinating terracotta army unearthed from the tomb of the First Emperor, Qin Shihuang; the tomb of Tang-dynasty Wu Zetian, China's first empress; and the stele forest. The province's beauty is capped with the sheer cliffs of Mount Huashan and the yellow earth of the Loess Plateau.

陝
Focus on Shaanxi

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Focus on Guangdong

An important gateway into China, the fertile Pearl River Delta of the southern province of Guangdong fans out from Guangzhou to the South China Sea and borders Hong Kong and Macao. The province's natural scenic spots include the limestone pinnacles of Zhaoqing's Seven Star Crags, the red sandstone of Danxia Mountain, and the volcanic beauty of Xiqiao Mountain. The capital, Guangzhou, offers plenty of history in its museums, temples, mosques and old colonial buildings.

粵
Focus on Guangdong

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Focus on Guizhou

Guizhou is a land of splendid natural scenery. Its towering mountains and karst landforms team up with the gurgling rivers and magnificent waterfalls to form a wonderful work of Mother Nature. Huangguoshu Waterfalls and the limestone caves are the province's most frequented scenic spots. The 17 ethnic groups living in the picturesque province further colour the land with vivid customs and joyous festivals. It is its natural beauty and culture that make Guizhou a perfect travel destination.

黔
Focus on Guizhou

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Focus on Tianjin

Tianjin, one of the four municipalities under direct Central Government administration, is an important industrial and commercial centre of China and the biggest port in the north. The history of the city can be found in its Ancient Culture Street, 100-year-old Western-style buildings, Opera Museum and Mazu Temple. Besides the TV Tower and the Haihe River in the city, there are scenic spots in the outskirts, including the Dule Temple and the Great Wall at Huangya Pass.

津
Focus on
Tianjin

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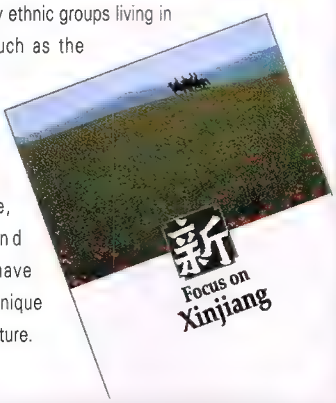
Focus on Xinjiang

On the vast land of Xinjiang in Northwest China, there are mountains, basins, deserts and lakes, which provide tourists with numerous attractions — ruins of ancient cities and tombs along the Silk Road; Turpan, an oasis in the desert; Kanas Lake, a gem imbedded in the Altay Mountains; Bayanbulak — the Swan Lake; and the world's second largest desert, the Taklimakan. The minority ethnic groups living in Xinjiang, such as the Uygur, Kazak, Mongolian, Uzbek, Tajik, Xibe, Kirgiz and Tatar, all have their own unique colourful culture.



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Focus on Beijing

Beijing is a metropolis of everlasting charm. There are simply too many captivating things to see, to experience and to taste in this grand city with both old glamour and new mobility. There are historical sites such as the Palace Museum (the Forbidden City), the Temple of Heaven, the Summer Palace, and the Ming Tombs; there are also many scenic spots in its outskirts. Recently, tours have been organised for visitors to taste the real Beijing flavour of life — touring the small back lanes, having tea in a traditional-style teahouse and enjoying the Peking Opera.

京
Focus on
Beijing

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Focus on Shanxi

Shanxi Province, one of the birthplaces of the Chinese civilisation, has impressive ancient architecture and a wealth of well-preserved Buddhist temples, monasteries and grottoes. Among the most famous are the Yungang Grottoes containing some of China's oldest sculptures and Buddhist art, the Yongle Palace, the Jinci Temple, the Hanging Monastery built on a sheer cliff and the Wutai Mountain, one of China's most famous sacred Buddhist lands.

晋
Focus on
Shanxi

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Focus on Guangxi

Unusual topography has endowed the province with numerous spectacular karst formations — limestone caves, pinnacles and rocks. The most famous and enchanting scenic spot is Guilin, and the most travelled route, on the Lijiang River from Guilin to Yangshuo. The coastal city of Beihai has the country's largest beach, the Silver Beach. Other attractions include the varied traditional customs of ethnic minorities, the Sino-Vietnamese border area, and the mysterious Huashan cliff paintings.

桂
Focus on
Guangxi

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Hotels in Tibet

City	Name	Star	Address	Tel	Fax
Lhasa	Holiday Inn Lhasa	****	1 Minzu Rd, Lhasa	(891) 6833221	(891) 6835796
	Tibet Hotel	***	221 Beijing Rd W, Lhasa	(891) 6834966	(891) 6336787
	Tibet Gold Grain Hotel	**	14 Yutuo Rd, Lhasa	(891) 6330367	(891) 6330367
	Tibet Dianxin Hotel	**	5 Lane 1, Lingkor Rd E, Lhasa	(891) 6321445	
	Sunlight Hotel Lhasa	**	27 Linju Rd, Lhasa	(891) 6335675	
	Himalayas Hotel	*	6 Lingkor Rd E, Lhasa	(891) 6334855	(891) 6332675
	Gongga Airport Hotel		Gongga Airport, Lhasa	(891) 6337393	
	Yak Hotel		100 Beijing Rd E, Lhasa	(891) 6323496	
	Kirey Hotel		105 Beijing Rd E, Lhasa	(891) 6323462	
	Banakshol Hotel		43 Beijing Rd E, Lhasa	(891) 6323829	
	Pentoc Guesthouse		14 Zangyiyuan Rd, Lhasa	(891) 6326686	
Xigazê	Xigazê Gang-gen Garden Guesthouse		Adjacent to Tashilunpo Temple, Xigazê		
	Xiagazê Sangzhuze Hotel		2 Gonggalin Rd, Xigazê		
	Xigazê Qomolangma Hotel		Southeast of Gang-gen Garden Guesthouse, Xigazê	(892) 8823383	
	Danzeng Hostel		Bangjiakong Rd, opposite to the agricultural market, Xigazê		
	Xigazê Hotel		Jiefang Rd C, Xigazê	(892) 8822550	
	Postal Hotel		Opposite to Xigazê Hotel, Xigazê		
Bayi	Nyingchi Hotel		25 Chuanzang Rd, Bayi	(894) 5821300	
	New Century Hotel		Shuijingyuan Rd, Bayi		
	Shidao Mingren Club		Gongbu Rd, Bayi	(894) 5885988	
	Gongbo'gyamda Taizhao Hotel		Chuanzang Rd, Gongbo'gyamda	(894) 5412186	
Qamdo	Qamdo Passenger Station Reception House		Jiare Flatland, Qamdo		
	Guangming Hotel		East of the Passenger Station, Qamdo		
	Kangsheng Hotel		East of the Passenger Station, Qamdo		
Tingri	Tingri Guesthouse		Xiegar Town, Tingri		
Nagqu	Nagqu Hotel		262 Seni Rd E, Nagqu		

Flights to and from **Lhasa**

Route	Days	Dep.	Arr.	Flight
Beijing — Lhasa	1 5	0910	1400	SZ4112
Lhasa — Beijing	4	1350	1830	SZ4111
	7	1520	1950	SZ4111
Qamdo — Lhasa	7	0850	0950	SZ4409
Lhasa — Qamdo	4	0920	1015	SZ4410
Chengdu — Lhasa	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0630	0820	SZ4401
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0640	0835	SZ4403
	4	0650	0840	SZ4443
	2 4 6	0705	0855	SZ4405
	4 7	0710	1205	SZ4429
	1 5	1210	1400	SZ4112
	2 6	1215	1405	SZ4445
	7	1300	1440	SZ4445
Lhasa — Chengdu	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0930	1115	SZ4402
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0945	1135	SZ4404
	7	1030	1210	SZ4446
	4 7	1245	1725	SZ4430
	2 6	1350	1530	SZ4444
	4	1350	1535	SZ4111
	1 5	1440	1620	SZ4406
	2 6	1445	1625	SZ4446
	7	1520	1700	SZ4111

Route	Days	Dep.	Arr.	Flight
Chongqing — Lhasa	3 6	0650	0910	SZ4419
	1	1055	1315	SZ4312
Lhasa — Chongqing	3 6	1020	1230	SZ4420
	1	1355	1600	SZ4311
Dêqên — Lhasa	4 7	1020	1205	SZ4429
Lhasa — Dêqên	4 7	1245	1415	SZ4430
Guangzhou — Lhasa	1	0835	1315	SZ4312
Lhasa — Guangzhou	1	1355	1815	SZ4311
Kathmandu — Lhasa	2 4 6	0945	1310	SZ 408
Lhasa — Kathmandu	2 4 6	0940	0840	SZ 407
Kunming — Lhasa	4 7	0850	1205	SZ4429
Lhasa — Kunming	4 7	1245	1545	SZ4430
Shanghai — Lhasa	3 7	0750	1430	SZ4812
Lhasa — Shanghai	1 5	1345	2015	SZ4811
Xi'an — Lhasa	1 5	0915	1305	SZ4217
	3 7	1045	1430	SZ4812
Lhasa — Xi'an	1 5	1345	1730	SZ4811
	3 7	1515	1845	SZ4218
Xining — Lhasa	1 5	1100	1305	SZ4217
	3 7	1225	1430	SZ4812
Lhasa — Xining	1 5	1345	1545	SZ4811
	3 7	1515	1705	SZ4218

Flights to and from **Kunming**

Route	Days	Dep.	Arr.	Flight
Beijing — Kunming	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1200	1505	3Q4122
Kunming — Beijing	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0805	1105	3Q4121
Chengdu — Kunming	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0830	0930	3U 461
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1240	1335	SZ4413
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1820	1915	3U 465
Kunming — Chengdu	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1010	1110	3U 462
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1415	1520	SZ4414
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1955	2100	3U 466
Dali — Kunming	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0815	1020	3Q4461
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	2120	2150	3Q4462
Kunming — Dali	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0715	0745	3Q4461
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1840	2040	3Q4462
Dêqên — Kunming	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0820	0910	3Q4490
Kunming — Dêqên	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0650	0745	3Q4489
Guangzhou — Kunming	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0740	0940	CZ3409
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1840	2030	3Q4342
Kunming — Guangzhou	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1600	1745	3Q4341
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1620	1755	CZ3410

Route	Days	Dep.	Arr.	Flight
Hong Kong — Kunming	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1330	1535	CZ 342
Kunming — Hong Kong	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1035	1230	CZ 341
Macao — Kunming	2 3 4 5 6	1835	2030	3Q 492
Kunming — Macao	2 3 4 5 6	1530	1730	3Q 491
Shanghai — Kunming	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1225	1525	FM 453
Kunming — Shanghai	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1935	2225	FM 454
Xiamen — Kunming	1 2 4 6 7	1325	1640	SZ4872
	2 3 5 7	1045	1305	MF8437
Kunming — Xiamen	1 2 4 6 7	0945	1245	SZ4871
	2 3 5 7	1345	1610	MF8438
Xi'an — Kunming	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0855	1050	WH2409
Kunming — Xi'an	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1145	1330	WH2410
Xishuangbanna — Kunming	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0940	1020	3Q4461
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1755	1850	FM 454
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1955	2150	3Q4462
Kunming — Xishuangbanna	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0715	0915	3Q4461
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1605	1705	FM 453
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1840	1920	3Q4462

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Airline codes:

CZ = China Southern Airlines	FM = Shanghai Airlines	MF = Xiamen Airlines Co Ltd	SZ = China Southwest Airlines
WH = China Northwest Airlines	3Q = Yunnan Airlines	3U = Sichuan Airlines	

Highlights of Issue No. 262

- **Mount Changbai** in Jilin Province, Northeast China, has long been reputed as a favoured tourist destination. It is a breathtaking place encompassing primitive forests, canyons, waterfalls, birch forests, a tundra zone, and the extraordinary Tianchi, or Heavenly Pond, the world's highest crater lake. In the next "Feature Story", our reporter presents experiences obtained along three different travel routes to Mount Changbai, on the north, west and south sides, as well as a visit to Hunchun, a town situated on the border area linking China with Russia and Korea.

- Within a short time period, our correspondent drove a car in and around **Yinchuan**, capital city of Northwest China's Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. In this unencumbered way, he could stop at places which interested him, spending more time appreciating the ancient Chengtian Pagoda, visiting the Mausoleum of Western Xia, feeling a Song-dynasty general's spirit on Helan Mountain, and wandering around to see the city and its people. His narration appears in the next "On the Way".

- Situated in the northernmost part of Shanxi Province, **Datong**, one of the first 24 places honoured as Famous Historical and Cultural Cities in China, was once a strategic town beside the Great Wall. Apart from its well-known temples and grottoes, Datong also boasts several preserved ancient military heritage sites built along the Great Wall: passes, fortresses, protecting walls, watchtowers, beacon towers, cols, etc. A field trip to these once significant military facilities allows visitors to better understand the past and the present local life.

APRIL

April-May

Festival Months in Shanghai Visitors can enjoy festive activities in Shanghai in April and May. Starting in early April, prolific peach blossoms will adorn the Taoyuan Folk Culture Village in Hui'nan Town, Nanhui County, during the Peach Flower Festival. Following closely on is a grand Flower Show in Changfeng (Long Wind) Park. And from late April to May, there will be a Tea Culture Festival in Zhabei District.

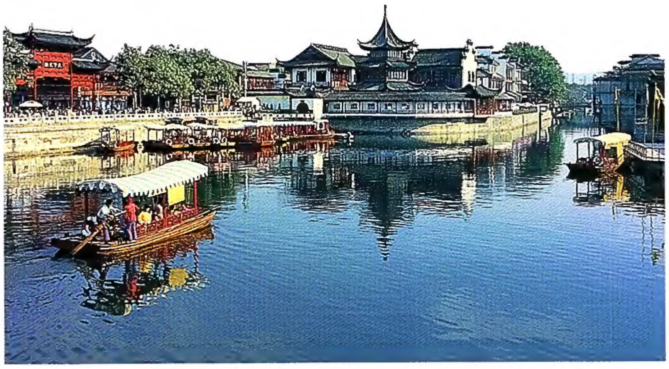
Jan15-May15

Taipei Ice Wonderland The biggest of its kind in Southeast Asia, the Taipei Ice Wonderland features four theme parks including the Icy Jurassic, Monsters on Devil Island, Buddhist Ice Sculptures, and Searching for Plums in Heavy Snow. Other attractions are Treasures in China, Cartoon World, Entertaining World, Lanterns in Plum Garden, Animal Wonders, Cultural Hall, and an outdoor area of 2,200 square metres. Visitors can appreciate real plum trees from the mainland as well as ice sculptures of the Dunhuang and Longmen grottoes, dinosaurs, and cartoon characters. Ice-carving masters from Harbin, Heilongjiang, have been invited to participate.

Admission: NT$450
Time: 10:00-20:00 (extended during public holidays)
Location: Intersection at Chongqing Rd N and Citizen Boulevard (alongside Taipei Railway Station)

April 10-May 10

The 10th China Domestic Travel Market This will be the first time that Jiangsu Province hosts such a grand, national-scale tourism event. Organised by the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) and held in the capital city of Nanjing, the fair is estimated to receive around 15,000 people from 50 companies in the tourism industry, and the number of standard booths will reach 2,000. About 100 well-known large companies in the country have been invited as buyers.



April 18-May 2

Two Int'l Kite Festivals The first festival will be held in Weifang from April 18-21 in East China's Shandong Province. The second, from April 30-May 2, will take place in Guiyang, capital of Southwest China's Guizhou Province. In the latter event, hospitality will be awarded to six participants, who will be provided with accommodation, meals and transportation. Registration for the Guiyang Kite Festival will end on March 31, 2002.

Contact: Wang Baosheng / Wang Qiang
Tel: 86-10-67147626 Fax: 86-10-67133577

March 28-April 28

Changde Peach Flower Garden Fair Taohuayuan (Peach Flower Garden) in Changde, Central China's Hunan Province, has a 1,600-year history. From late March to April every year, tourists can appreciate the thousands of heavenly peach blossoms in Taohuayuan.

April 4-7

The Third Kunming Int'l Tourism Festival Organised by the CNTA and Yunnan Provincial People's Government, the festival will feature a wide range of colourful tourist activities such as a food fair, a travel product exchange conference and various activities focusing on folk cultures. Apart from the main festival site in Kunming, more than a dozen other cities and areas in Yunnan will serve as branch festival venues. Eight highlighted travel routes in Yunnan will also be publicised to tourists from home and abroad.

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